

INTRODUCTION

TO

THE MINOR PROPHETS,

AND CHIEFLY TO

HOSEA.

THE TWELVE PROPHETS, at the head of whom Hosea has been placed, were called of old "the lesser, or minor prophets," by reason of the smaller compass of their prophecies, not as though their prophecies were less important than those of the four greater prophets. Hosea, at least, must have exercised the prophetic office longer than any besides; he must have spoken as much and as often, in the Name of God. A prophecy of Micah and words of Joel are adopted by Isaiah; Jeremiah employs verses of Obadiah to denounce anew the punishment of Edom; a prophecy of Joel is expanded by Ezekiel. The "twelve" were the organs of important prophecy, as to their own people, or foreign nations, or as to Him Whom they looked for, our Lord. Now, since the first five were earlier than Isaiah, and next, in order of time, to the Prophetic Psalms of David, Solomon, Asaph and the sons of Korah, the revelations made to these lesser Prophets even ante-date those given through the four greater. The general out-pouring of the Spirit on all flesh and the Day of the Lord were first spoken of by Joel. Our resurrection in Christ on the 3d day; the inward graces which Christ should bestow on His Church in its perpetual union with Him; the entire victory over death and the grave; and

the final conversion of Judah and Israel, were first prophesied by Hosea. When S. James wished to shew that the conversion of the Gentiles had been foretold by a prophet, he quoted a passage of Amos. "The twelve," as they begun, so they closed the cycle of those whom God employed to leave written prophecies. Yet God, Who willed that of all the earlier prophets, who prophesied from the time of Samuel to Elisha, no prophecy should remain, except the few words in the books of Kings, willed also, that little, in comparison, should be preserved, of what these later prophets spake in His Name. Their writings altogether are not equal in compass to those of the one prophet, Isaiah. And so, like the twelve Apostles, they were enrolled in one prophetic band; their writings, both in the Jewish^b and Christian^c Church, have been counted as one book; and, like the Apostles, they were called "the twelve^d."

The earliest of this band followed very closely upon the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Elisha, in his parting words^e, foretold to Joash the three victories whereby he recovered from Syria the cities of Israel which Hazael had taken from his father Jehoahaz. In the next reign, viz., that of Jeroboam II., there arose the first of that brilliant constellation of prophets, whose light

^a S. Aug. de Civ. D. xviii. 29. "The Prophet Isaiah is not in the books of the 12 prophets who are therefore called minor, because their discourses are brief in comparison with those who are called 'greater' because they composed considerable volumes."

^b The Jewish tradition ran, "our fathers made them one book, that they might not perish, for

their littleness." Bava Bathra (c. l. f. 14. col. 2.) in Carpov Intr. iii. p. 72. Josephus must so have counted them, since he counted all the books of the O. T., besides the five books of Moses and the Psalms and books of Solomon, as 13. c. Ap. l. 8. see Cosin. Hist. of the Canon § 25. * See Cosin. § 47. sqq.

^c See Carpov iii. 270. and Cosin.

^d 2 K. xiii. 14. sqq. 25.

gleamed over the fall of Israel and Judah, shone in their captivity, and set at last, with the prediction of him, who should precede the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

In the reign of Jeroboam II., Hosea, Amos, Jonah, prophesied in the kingdom of Israel. Joel was probably called at the same time to prophesy in Judah, and Obudiah to deliver his prophecy as to Edom; Isaiah, a few years later: Micah, we know, began his office in the following reign of Jotham, and then prophesied, together with Isaiah, to and in the reign of Hezekiah.

The order, then, of "the twelve" was probably, for the most part, an order of time. We know that the greater prophets are placed in that order, as also the three last of the twelve, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Of the five first, Hosea, Amos and Jonah were nearly contemporary; Joel was prior to Amos¹; and of the four remaining, Micah and Nahum were later than Jonah, whom they succeed in order; Nahum refers to Jonah; Zephaniah quotes Habakkuk. It may be from an old Jewish tradition, that S. Jerome says², "know that those prophets, whose time is not prefixed in the title, prophesied under the same kings, as those other prophets, who are placed before them, and who have titles."

Hosea, the first of the twelve, must have prophesied during a period, as long as the ordinary life of man. For he prophesied (the title tells us) while Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam II., king of Israel, were both reigning, as also during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. But Uzziah survived Jeroboam, 26 years. Jotham and Ahaz reigned, each, 16 years. Thus we have already 58 years complete, without counting the years of Jeroboam, during which Hosea prophesied at the beginning of his office, or those of Hezekiah which elapsed before its close. But since the prophecy of Hosea is directed almost exclusively to Israel, it is not probable that the name of Jeroboam would alone have been selected for mention, unless Hosea had prophesied for some time during his reign. The house of Jehu, which sunk after the death of Jeroboam, was yet³ standing, and in its full strength, when Hosea first prophesied. Its might apparently is contrasted with the comparative weakness of Judah⁴. On the other hand, the office of Hosea probably closed before the end of the 4th year of Hezekiah⁵. For in that year, B. C. 721, the judgment denounced by Hosea upon Samaria was fulfilled, and all his prophecy looks on to this event as yet to

come: the 13th chapter closes with the prophecy of the utter destruction of Samaria; and of the horrible cruelties which would befall her helpless ones. The last chapter alone winds up the long series of denunciations by a prediction of the future conversion of Israel. This chapter, however, is too closely connected with the preceding, to admit of its being a consolation after the captivity had begun. If then we suppose that Hosea prophesied during 2 years only of the reign of Hezekiah, and 10 of those in which the reigns of Jeroboam II. and Uzziah coincided, his ministry will have lasted 70 years. A long and heavy service for a soul full of love like his, mitigated only by his hope of the Coming of Christ, the final conversion of his people, and the victory over the grave! But the length is nothing incredible, since, about this time, Jehoiada "did good in Israel both towards God and towards His House," until he "was 130 years." The shortest duration of Hosea's office must have been some 65 years. But if God called him quite young to his office, he need not have lived about 95 years, whereas Anna the Prophetess served God in the temple with fasting and prayer night and day, after a widowhood probably of 84 years⁶; and S. John the Evangelist lived probably until 104 years; and S. Polycarp became a martyr, when he was about 104 years old, having served Christ for 86 years⁷, and having, when 95, sailed from Asia to Italy. Almost in our own days, we have heard of 100 centenarians, deputed by a religious order who ate no animal food, to bear witness that their rule of life was not unhealthy. Not then the length of Hosea's life, but his endurance, was superhuman. So long did God will that His prophets should toil; so little fruit were they content to leave behind them. For these few chapters alone remain of a labour beyond the ordinary life of man. But they were content to have God for their exceeding great reward.

The time, during which Hosea prophesied, was the darkest period in the history of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam II. was almost the last king who ruled in it by the appointment of God. The promise of God to Jehu⁸ in reward of his partial obedience, that his "children of the fourth generation should sit on the throne of Israel," expired with Jeroboam's son, who reigned but for 6 months⁹ after an anarchy of 11 years. The rest of Hosea's life was passed amid the decline of the kingdom of Israel. Politically all was anarchy or misrule; kings made their way to the throne through the murder of their pre-

¹ See Introd. to Joel.

² Pref. in duod. Proph.

³ Ch. i. 4, 5.

⁴ Ch. i. 7.

⁵ 2 Kgs xviii. 9.

⁶ 2 Chron. xxiv. 15.

⁷ So S. Ambrose and others understand the words "a widow of about fourscore and four years;" (S. Luke ii. 37.) and it seems the most natural. If,

according to Jewish law and practice, she was married at 12, her widowhood, after "7 years" began when she was 19, and when she was permitted to see our Lord, she was 103.

⁸ Ep. Eccl. Smyrn. in Eus. H. E. iv. 15.

⁹ 2 Kgs x. 30. ¹⁰ 2 K. xv. 8. ¹¹ See 1b. 10, 14, 25, 30.

decessors, and made way for their successors through their own². Shallum slew Zechariah; Menahem slew Shallum; Pekah slew the son of Menahem; Hoshea slew Pekah. The whole kingdom of Israel was a military despotism, and, as in the Roman empire, those in command came to the throne. Baasha, Zimri, Omri, Jehu, Menahem, Pekah, held military office before they became kings³.

Each usurper seems to have strengthened himself by a foreign alliance. At least, we find Baasha in league with Benhadad, king of Syria⁴; Ahab marrying Jezebel, daughter of a king of Tyre and Zidon⁵; Menahem giving Pul king of Assyria tribute, that he might "confirm the kingdom in his hand"⁶; Pekah confederate with Rezin⁷. These alliances brought with them the corruptions of the Phœnician and Syrian idolatry, wherein murder and lust became acts of religion. Jehu also probably sent tribute to the king of Assyria, to secure to himself the throne which God had given him. The fact appears in the cuneiform inscriptions⁸; it falls in with the character of Jehu and his half-belief, using all means, human or divine, to establish his own end. In one and the same spirit, he destroyed the Baal-worshippers, as adherents of Ahab, retained the calf-worship, courted the ascetic Jonadab son of Rechab, spoke of the death of Jehoram as the fulfilment of prophecy, and sought help from the king of Assyria.

These irreligions had the more deadly sway, because they were countenanced by the corrupt worship, which Jeroboam I. had set up as the state religion, over against the worship at Jerusalem. To allow the people to go up to Jerusalem, as the centre of the worship of God, would have risked their

owning the line of David as the kings of God's appointment. To prevent this, Jeroboam set up a great system of rival worship. Himself a refugee in Egypt⁹, he had there seen nature (i. e. what are God's workings in nature) worshiped under the form of the calf¹⁰. He adopted it, in the words in which Aaron had been overborne to sanction it, as the worship of the One True God under a visible form: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt¹¹." With great human subtlety, he laid hold of Israel's love for idol-worship, and their reverence for their ancestors, and words which even Aaron had used, and sought to replace, by this symbol of God's working. His actual presence over the mercy-seat. Around this he gathered as much of the Mosaic ritual as he could. The Priests and Levites remaining faithful to God¹², he made others priests, not of the line of Aaron¹³. Then, while he gratified the love of idolatry, he decked it out with all the rest of the worship which God had appointed for Himself. He retained the feasts which God had appointed, the three great festivals¹⁴, their solemn assemblies¹⁵, the new moons and sabbaths¹⁶; and these last feasts were observed even by those, to whose covetousness the rest on the festival was a hindrance¹⁷. Every kind of sacrifice was retained, the daily sacrifice¹⁸, the burnt-offering¹⁹, the meal-offering²⁰, the drink-offering²¹, thank-offerings²², peace-offerings²³, free-will offerings²⁴, sin-offerings²⁵. They had hymns and instrumental music²⁶. They paid the tithes of the third year²⁷; probably they gave the first fruits²⁸; they had priests²⁹ and prophets³⁰ and temples³¹; the temple at Bethel was the king's chapel, the temple of the state³². The worship was maintained by the civil authority³³. But all this

¹ Nadab was with the army besieging Gibbethon, when Baasha slew him (1 Kgs xv. 27.); Zimri was "captain of half the chariots of Elah son of Baasha" (Ib. xvi. 9.); "all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel in the camp" (Ib. 16.). Jehu seems to have been chief among the captains (2 Kgs ix. 5.). Menahem "went up from Tirzah" (the residence of the kings of Israel until Omri built Samaria) Ib. xvi. 14. Pekah was a captain of Remaliah (Ib. 25.).

² 1 Kgs xv. 19. ³ 1 Kgs xvi. 31. ⁴ 2 Kgs xv. 19.

⁵ Is. vii. 1, 9, 16. 2 Chron. xxviii. 5, 6.

⁶ Sir H. Rawlinson and Dr. Hincks separately deciphered the name "Jahua (𐤎𐤅𐤔)" son of Khumri "as one of those whose tribute is recorded on the Black obelisk [probably of Shalmanubar,] now in the British Museum. In the same inscription Bethi-Khumri i. e. house or city of Omri (P for Y) occurs for Samaria. Jehu may be so named from his capital, or from supposed or claimed descent from Omri. See Layard Nin. and Bab. p. 613. Rawlins. Herod. i. 465. Dr. Hincks Dublin Univ. Mag. 1833. p. 426. Scripture ascribes to Jehu personal might (𐤎𐤅𐤔), but in his days Israel lost to Hazael all the country beyond Jordan. The attack of Hazael may have been the cause or the effect of his seeking help of Assyria.

⁷ 1 Kgs xl. 40. xli. 2.

⁸ Two living bulls, Apis and Mnevis, were wor-

shipped as symbols of Osiris and the sun at Memphis and Heliopolis. Diod. Sic. i. 21. Strabo xvii.

⁹ Ex. xxxii. 4. 1 Kgs xii. 28. ¹⁰ 2 Chron. xi. 13-15.

¹¹ 1 Kgs xii. 31. "He made priests out of the lowest of the people" (lit. "the end of the people") should be rendered "from the whole of the people" [indiscriminately] "which were not of the sons of Levi."

¹² Hosea ii. 11. ix. 5. Amos v. 21. Jeroboam transferred, apparently, the feast of tabernacles from the 15th of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 34.) to the 15th of the eighth month (1 Kgs xii. 32, 33.).

¹³ Amos v. 21. ¹⁴ Hosea ii. 11. ¹⁵ Amos viii. 5.

¹⁶ Ib. iv. 4. ¹⁷ Ib. v. 22. ¹⁸ Hosea ix. 4. Amos v. 22.

¹⁹ Hosea ix. 4. ²⁰ Hosea v. 6, vi. 6, perhaps iv. 8.

²¹ Amos iv. 5, and of this class generally, Hosea viii. 13.

²² Amos v. 23. viii. 3. ²³ Amos iv. 4.

²⁴ These were brought to Elisha (2 Kgs iv. 42.) from Baal-Shalisha in the mountainous country of Ephraim, where "the land of Shalish" was, (1 Sam. ix. 4.) by one probably who could not own the calf-priests. The prophets acted as priests in the kingdom of Israel. 1 Kgs xviii. 36. 2 Kgs iv. 23. Hence the mention of "altars of the Lord" in Israel also, 1 Kgs xviii. 30. xix. 20.

²⁵ 1 Kgs xli. 32. Hosea iv. 6, v. 1. vi. 9. x. 5.

²⁶ Hosea iv. 5. ix. 7, 8.

²⁷ 1 Kgs xli. 31, 32. Hosea viii. 14.

²⁸ Amos vii. 13.

²⁹ Hosea v. 11. xiii. 2.

outward shew was rotten at the core. God had forbidden man so to worship Him, nor was it He Who was worshiped at Bethel and Dan, though Jeroboam probably meant it. People, when they alter God's truth, alter more than they think for. Such is the lot of all heresy. Jeroboam probably meant that God should be worshiped under a symbol, and he brought in a worship, which was not, in truth, a worship of God at all. The calf was the symbol, not of the personal God, but of ever-renewed life, His continued vivifying of all which lives, and renewing of what decays. And so what was worshiped was not God, but much what men now call "nature." The calf was a symbol of "nature;" much as men say, "nature does this or that;" "nature makes man so and so;" "nature useth simplicity of means;" "nature provides," &c.; as if "nature were a sort of semi-deity," or creation were its own Creator. As men now profess to own God, and do own Him in the abstract, but talk of "nature," till they forget Him, or because they forget Him, so Jeroboam, who was a shrewd, practical, irreligious man, slipped into a worship of nature, while he thought, doubtless, he was doing honor to the Creator, and professing a belief in Him.

But they were those same workings in creation, which were worshiped by the neighboring heathen, in Baal and Ashtaroth; only there the name of the Creator was altogether dropped. Yet it was but a step from one to the other. The calf was the immediate and often the sole object of worship. They "sacrificed to the calves;" "kissed the calves" in token of worship; swore by them as living gods*. They had literally "changed their Glory [i. e. God] into the similitude of a bull which eateth hay." Calf-worship paved the way for those coarser and more cruel worships of nature, under the names of Baal and Ashtaroth, with all their abominations of consecrated child-sacrifices, and degrading or horrible sensuality. The worship of the calves led to sin. The heathen festival was one of unbridled licentiousness. The account of the calf-festival in the wilderness agrees too well with the heathen descriptions. The very least which can be inferred from the words "Aaron had made them naked to their shame before their enemies," is an extreme relaxedness, on the borders of further sin.

And now in Hosea's time, these idolatries had yielded their full bitter fruits. The course of iniquity had been run. The stream had become darker and darker in its downward flow. Creature worship (as S. Paul points out*), was the parent of every sort of abomination; and religion having become creature-worship, what God gave as the check to sin became its incentive. Every commandment of God was broken, and that, habitually. All was falsehood^a, adultery^b, bloodshedding^c; deceit to God^d produced faithlessness to man; excess^e and luxury^f were supplied by secret^g or open robbery^h, oppressionⁱ, false dealing^j, perversion of justice^k, grinding of the poor^l. Blood was shed like water, until one stream met another^m, and overspread the land with one defiling deluge. Adultery was consecrated as an act of religionⁿ. Those who were first in rank were first in excess. People and king vied in debauchery^o, and the sottish king joined and encouraged the freethinkers and blasphemers of his court^p. The idolatrous priests loved and shared in the sins of the people^q; nay, they seem to have set themselves to intercept those on either side of Jordan, who would go to worship at Jerusalem, laying wait to murder them^r. Corruption had spread throughout the whole land^s; even the places once sacred through God's revelations or other mercies to their forefathers, Bethel^t, Gilgal^u, Gilead^v, Mizpah^w, Shechem^x, were especial scenes of corruption or of sin. Every holy memory was effaced by present corruption. Could things be worse? There was one aggravation more. Remonstrance was useless^y; the knowledge of God was wilfully rejected^z; the people hated rebuke^{aa}; the more they were called, the more they refused^{ab}; they forbade their prophets to prophesy^{ac}; and their false prophets hated God greatly^{ad}. All attempts to heal all this disease only shewed its incurableness^e.

Such was the condition of the people among whom Hosea had to prophesy for some 70 years. They themselves were not sensible of their decay, moral or political. They set themselves, in despite of the Prophet's warning, to prop up their strength by aid of the two heathen nations, Egypt or Assyria. In Assyria they chiefly trusted^d, and Assyria, he had to denounce to them, should carry them captive^e; stragglers at least,

* 1 Kgs. xiii. 32. * Hosea xiii. 2. * Amos viii. 4.

* Ps. cvi. 20. * Ex. xxxiii. 25. * Rom. i.

* Hosea iv. 1. vii. 1. 3.

* Ib. iv. 11. v. 3. 4. vii. 4. ix. 10. Amos ii. 7.

* Hosea v. 2. vi. 8. * Ib. iv. 2. x. 13. xi. 12.

* Ib. iv. 11. vii. 5. Amos iv. 1.

* Hosea iii. 15. vi. 4-6.

* Ib. iv. 2. vii. 1.

* Ib. vii. 1. * Ib. xii. 7. Amos iii. 9, 10. iv. 1. v. 11.

* Hosea xii. 7. Amos vii. 5.

* Hosea x. 4. Amos. ii. 6, 7. v. 7, 12. vi. 3, 12.

* Amos ii. 7. viii. 6. * Hosea iv. 2.

* See on iv. 14. * Hosea vii. 5. * Ib. vii. 5.

* Ib. iv. 8, 9. * Ib. v. 1. vi. 9. * Ib. v. 1.

* Hosea iv. 15. x. 5, 8. 15. xii. 4. Amos iii. 14. v. 5.

vi. 10. 13.

* Hosea iv. 15. ix. 15. xii. 11. * Hosea vi. 8. xii. 11.

* v. 1. * See on vi. 9. * Ib. iv. 4. * Ib. 6.

* Amos v. 10. * Hosea xi. 2. add 7.

* Amos ii. 12. * Hosea ix. 7, 9.

* Ib. vii. 1. * Ib. vii. 9.

* Ib. v. 13. viii. 9, 10. xiv. 3. and with Egypt, vii.

11. xii. 1.

* Hosea x. 6. xi. 9. (denying it of Egypt.)

from them fled to Egypt¹, and in Egypt they should be a derision², and should find their grave³. This captivity he had to foretell as imminent⁴, certain⁵, irreversible⁶. Once only, in the commencement of his prophecy, does he give any hope, that the temporal punishment might be averted through repentance. This too he follows up by renewing the declaration of God expressed in the name of his daughter, "I will not have mercy⁷." He gives them in God's Name, a distant promise of a spiritual restoration in Christ, and forewarns them that it is distant⁸. But, that they might not look for any temporal restoration, he tells them, on the one hand, in peremptory terms, of their dispersion; on the other, he tells them of their spiritual restoration without any intervening shadows of temporal deliverance. God tells them absolutely, "I will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease;" "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel;" "they shall be wanderers among the nations;" "they shall not dwell in the Lord's land;" "Israel is swallowed up; she shall be among the nations like a vessel in which is no pleasure." On the other hand, the promises are markedly spiritual⁹; "Ye are the sons of the living God;" "I will betroth her to Me for ever;" "they shall fear the Lord and His goodness;" "He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight;" "till He come and rain righteousness upon you." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." Again, God contrasts¹⁰ with this His sentence on Israel, His future dealings with Judah, and His mercies to her, of which Israel should not partake, while of Judah's spiritual mercies, He says, that Israel should partake by being united with Judah¹¹.

The ground of this difference was, that Israel's separate existence was bound up with that sin of Jeroboam, which clave to them throughout their history, and which none of their least bad kings ventured to give up. God tried them for two centuries and a half; and not one king was found, who would risk his throne for God. In merciful severity then, the separate kingdom of Israel was to be destroyed, and the separate existence of the ten tribes was to be lost.

This message of woe gives a peculiar character to the prophecies of Hosea. He, like St. Paul, was of the people, whose temporary excision he had to declare. He calls the wretched king of Israel "our king";

and God calls the rebellious people "thy people."¹² Of that people, he was specially the prophet. Judah he mentions incidentally, when he does mention them, not in his warnings only, but in his prophecies of good also. His main commission lay among the ten tribes. Like Elijah and Elisha whom he succeeded, he was raised up out of them, for them. His love could not be tied down to them; and so he could not but warn Judah against sharing Israel's sin. But it is, for the most part, incidentally and parenthetically¹³. He does not speak of them equally, except as to that which was the common sin of both, the seeking to Assyria for help, and unfulfilled promise of amendment¹⁴. And so, on the other hand, mercies, which belong to all as God's everlasting betrothal of His Church¹⁵, and our redemption from death¹⁶ and the grave, he foretells with special reference to Ephraim, and in one place only expressly includes Judah¹⁷.

The prophecies of Hosea (as he himself collected them) form one whole, so that they cannot be distinctly separated. In one way, as the second chapter is the expansion and application of the first, so the remainder of the book after the third is an expansion and application of the third. The first and third chapters illustrate, summarily, Ephraim's ingratitude and desertion of God and His dealings with her, by likening them to the wife which Hosea was commanded to take, and to her children. The second chapter expands and applies the picture of Israel's unfaithfulness, touched upon in the first, but it dwells more on the side of mercy; the remaining chapters enlarge the picture of the third, although, until the last, they dwell chiefly on the side of judgment. Yet while the remainder of the book is an expansion of the third chapter, the three first chapters, (as every reader has felt) are united together, not by their narrative form only, but by the prominence given to the history of Hosea which furnishes the theme of the book, the shameful unfaithfulness of Israel, and the exceeding tenderness of the love of God, Who, "in wrath, remembers mercy."

The narrative leads us deep into the Prophet's personal sorrows. There is no ground to justify our taking as a parable, what Holy Scripture relates as a fact. There is no instance in which it can be shewn, that Holy Scripture relates that a thing was done, and *that*, with the names of persons, and yet that God did not intend it to be taken as

¹ Hosea ix. 3.

² Hosea ix. 6.

³ v. 9. ix. 7.

⁴ i. 2-4.

⁵ i. 4, 6. ix. 17. ix. 3. viii. 8. and of distant captivity iv. 19 and 16.

⁶ i. 10. ii. 19. sqq. iii. 5. vi. 1-3. x. 12. xiii. 14.

⁷ i. 7. vi. 11.

⁸ Hosea vii. 16.

⁹ i. 4. v. 7.

¹⁰ i. 6. v. 6.

¹¹ iii. 4. 5.

¹² vii. 1.

¹³ iv. 4. The words, "I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel" (vi. 10.), are words of God, not the prophet's own observation.

¹⁴ iv. 16. v. 6, 10. vi. 11. "Judah also;" viii. 14. xi. 12. "Judah yet ruleth;" xii. 2. "with Judah also."

¹⁵ v. 13. 14. vi. 4.

¹⁶ xiii. 14.

¹⁷ i. 11. Judah is included virtually in iii. 5.

literally true^b. There would then be no test left of what was real, what imaginary; and the histories of Holy Scripture would be left to be a prey to individual caprice, to be explained away as parables, when men disliked them. Hosea, then, at God's command, united to himself in marriage, one who, amid the widespread corruption of those times, had fallen manifoldly into fleshly sin. With her he was commanded to live holily, as his wife, as Isaac lived with Rebecca whom he loved. Such an one he took, in obedience to God's command, one Gomer. At some time after she bore the prophet's children, she fell into adultery, and forsook him. Perhaps she fell into the condition of a slave^c. God anew commanded him to shew mercy to her, to redeem her from her fallen condition, and, without restoring to her the rights of marriage^d, to guard and protect her from her sins. Thus, by the love of God and the patient forbearance which He instructed the prophet to shew, a soul was rescued from sin unto death, and was won to God; to the children of Israel there was set forth continually before their eyes a picture and a prophecy of the punishment upon sin, and of the close union with Himself which He vouchsafes to sinners who repent and return to Him.

"Not only in visions which were seen," says S. Irenæus^e, "and in words which were preached, but in acts also was He [the Word] seen by the Prophets, so as to prefigure and foreshew things future, through them. For which cause also, the Prophet Hosea took 'a wife of whoredoms,' prophesying by his act, that the earth, i. e. the men who are on the earth, shall commit whoredoms, departing from the Lord; and that of such men God will be pleased to take to Himself a Church, to be sanctified by the communication of His Son, as she too was sanctified by the communion of the Prophet. Wherefore Paul also saith, that 'the unbelieving woman is sanctified in her believing husband.'" "What," asks S. Augustine^f of the scoffers of his day, "is there opposed to the clemency of truth, what contrary to the Christian faith, that one unchaste, leaving her fornication, should be converted to a chaste marriage? And what so incongruous and alien from the faith of the Prophet, as it would have been, not to believe that all the sins of the unchaste were forgiven, when she was converted and amended? So then, when the Prophet made the unchaste one his wife, a kind provision was made for the woman to amend her life, and the mystery [of the union of Christ Himself with the

Church of Jews and Gentiles] was expressed." "Since the Lord, through the same Scripture, lays clearly open what is figured by this command and deed, and since the Apostolic Epistles attest that this prophecy was fulfilled in the preaching of the New Testament, who would venture to say that it was not commanded and done for that end, for which He who commanded it, explains in the holy Scripture that He commanded, and that the Prophet did it?"

The names which Hosea, by God's command gave to the children who were born, expressed the temporal punishment, which was to come upon the nation. The prophet himself, in his relation to his restored yet separated wife, was, so long as she lived, one continued, living prophecy of the tenderness of God to sinners. Fretful, wayward, jealous, ungovernable, as are mostly the tempers of those who are recovered from such sins as hers, the Prophet, in his anxious, watchful charge, was a striking picture of the forebearing loving-kindness of God to us amid our provocations and infirmities. Nay, the love which the Prophet bore her, grew the more out of his compassion and tenderness for her whom God had commanded him to take as his own. Certain it is, that Holy Scripture first speaks of her as the object of his love, when God commanded him a second time to take charge of her who had betrayed and abandoned him. God bids him shew active love to her, whom, amid her unfaithfulness, he loved already. *Go yet, love a woman, beloved of her husband, yet an adulteress.* Wonderful picture of God's love for us, for whom He gave His Only-begotten Son, loving us, while alien from Him, and with nothing in us to love!

Such was the tenderness of the Prophet, whom God employed to deliver such a message of woe; and such the people must have known to be his personal tenderness, who had to speak so sternly to them.

The three first prophecies, contained severally in the three first chapters, form each, a brief circle of mercy and judgment. They do not enter into any detail of Israel's sin, but sum up all in the one, which is both centre and circumference of all sin, the all-comprehending sin, departure from God, choosing the creature rather than the Creator. On this, the first prophecy foretells the entire irrevocable destruction of the kingdom; God's temporary rejection of His people, but their acceptance, together with Judah, in One Head, Christ. The second follows the same outline, rebuke, chastisement, the cessation

^b "The prophet obeys and marries one impure, whose name and her father's name he tells, that what he says might seem not to be a mere fiction, but a true history of facts." Theod. Mops.

^c See on iii. 2.

^d See on iii. 3.

^e iv. 20. 12. p. 374 O. T.

^f c. Faust. xxii. 80. Not only S. Ambrose (Apol. David. ii. 10. p. 728.) Theodoret, S. Cyril Alex., but even Theodoret of Mopsuestia understood the history as fact.

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 14.

² S. Aug. lb. 89.

of visible worship, banishment, and then the betrothal for ever. The third speaks of offence against deeper love, and more prolonged punishment. It too ends in the promise of entire restoration; yet only in the latter days, after *many days* of separation, both from idolatry and from the true worship of God, such as is Israel's condition now. The rest is one continuous prophecy, in which the Prophet has probably gathered into one the substance of what he had delivered in the course of his ministry. Here and there, yet very seldom in it¹, the Prophet refers to the image of the earlier chapters. For the most part he exhibits his people to themselves, in their varied ingratitude, folly, and sin. The prophecy has many pauses, which with one exception coincide with our chapters¹. It rises and falls, and then bursts out in fresh tones of upbraiding², and closes mostly in notes of sorrow and of woe³, for the destruction which is coming. Yet at none of these pauses is there any complete break, such as would constitute what preceded, a separate prophecy; and on the other hand, the structure of the last portion of the book corresponds most with that of the first three chapters, if it is regarded as one whole. For as there, after rebuke and threatened chastisement, each prophecy ended with the promise of future mercy, so here, after finally foreannouncing the miseries at the destruction of Samaria, the Prophet closes his prophecy and his whole book with a description of Israel's future repentance and acceptance, and of his flourishing with manifold grace.

The brief summary, in which the Prophet calls attention to all which he had said, and foretells, who would and who would not understand it, the more marks the prophecy as one whole.

Yet, although these prophecies, as wrought into one by the Prophet, bear a strong impress of unity, there yet seem to be traces, here and there, of the different conditions of the kingdom of Israel, amid which different parts were first uttered. The order, in which they stand, seems, upon the whole, to be an order of time. In the first chapters, the house of Jeroboam is still standing in strength, and Israel appears to have trusted in its own power, as the prophet Amos^m also, at the same time, describes them. The fourth chapter is addressed to the "house of Israel"ⁿ only, without any allusion to the king, and accords with that time of convulsive anarchy, which followed the death of Jeroboam II.

The omission of the king is the more remarkable, inasmuch as the "house of the king" is included in the corresponding address in ch. v.^o The "rulers"^p of Israel are also spoken of in the plural; and the bloodshed^q described seems to be more than individual insulated murders. In this case, the king upbraided in ch. v. would, naturally, be the next king, Zechariah, in whom God's promise to the house of Jehu expired. In the seventh chapter a weak and sottish king is spoken of, whom his princes misled to debauchery, disgusting drunkenness and impiety. But Menahem was a general of fierce determination, energy and barbarity. Debauchery and brutal ferocity are natural associates; but this sottishness here described was rather the fruit of weak compliance with the debauchery of others. "The princes made him sick," it is said. This is not likely to have been the character of successful usurpers, as Menahem, or Pekah, or Hoshea. It is far more likely to have been that of Zechariah, who was placed on the throne for 6 months, "did evil in the sight of the Lord," and then was "slain publicly before the people," no one resisting. Him, as being the last of the line of Jehu, and sanctioned by God, Hoshea may the rather have called "our king,"^r owning in him, evil as he was, God's appointment. The words, "they have devoured their judges, all their kings have fallen,"^s had anew their fulfillment in the murder of Zechariah and Shallum (B. C. 772) as soon as the promise to the house of Jehu had expired. The blame of Judah for "multiplying fenced cities," instead of trusting in God, probably relates to the temper in which they were built in the days of Jotham^t, between B. C. 758, and 741. Although Jotham was a religious king, the corruption of the people at this time is especially recorded; "the people did corruptly." Later yet, we have mention of the dreadful battle, when Shalman, or Shalmanezar, took and massacred women and children at Betharbel^u in the valley of Jezreel, about B. C. 729. Hoshea, thus, lived to see the fulfillment of his earlier prophecy, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." It has been thought that the question "where is thy king?"^v relates to the captivity of Hoshea, three years before the destruction of Samaria. This sort of question, however, relates not to the actual place where the king was, but to his ability or inability to help.

It belongs to the mournful solemnity of

¹iv. 5. v. 3. 7. ix. 1.

²ch. v. and vi. alone seems to be one.

³See the beginnings of cc. v. vii. viii. ix. x. xi. xii. xiii.

^mSee iv. ult. vii. 16. viii. 14. ix. 17. x. 15. xii. 14. xiii. 16. Chapters vi. and xi. close with the contrast with Judah, ch. vi., declaring that for Judah only was there a harvest reserved on its return from

captivity; ch. xi. that it alone maintained the true religion.

ⁿii. 14. 16. vi. 13.

^pHoshea iv. 1.

^qiv. 18. ^riv. 2.

^sHoshea vii. 5.

^t2 Chron. xxvii. 2-4.

^u1b. i. 4. see on x. 14.

^vvii. 5.

^wvii. 7.

^x2 Kgs xv. 10.

^yviii. 14.

^zHoshea x. 14.

Hosea's prophecy, that he scarcely speaks to the people in his own person. The ten chapters, which form the centre of the prophecy, are almost wholly one long dirge of woe, in which the prophet rehearses the guilt and the punishment of his people. If the people are addressed, it is, with very few exceptions, God Himself, not the Prophet, Who speaks to them; and God speaks to them as their Judge^a. Once only does the Prophet use the form, so common in the other Prophets, "saith the Lord." As in the three first chapters, the Prophet, in his relation to his wife, represented that of God to His people, so, in these ten chapters, after the first words of the fourth and fifth chapters, "Hear the word of the Lord, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land," "Hear ye this, O priests," whenever the prophet uses the first person, he uses it not of himself, but of God. "I" "My" are not Hosea, and the things of Hosea, but God and what belongs to God. God addresses the Prophet himself in the second person^d. In four verses only of these chapters does the Prophet himself apparently address his own people Israel, in two^e expostulating with them; in two^f, calling them to repentance. In two other verses he addresses Judah^g, or foretells to him judgment mingled with mercy^h. The last chapter alone is one of almost unmingled brightness; the Prophet calls to repentanceⁱ, and God in His own Person^j accepts it, and promises large supply of grace. But this too closes the prophecy with the warning, that righteous as are the ways of God, the transgressors should stumble in them.

It is this same solemn pathos, which has chiefly occasioned the obscurity, complained of in Hosea. The expression of S. J. Rome has often been repeated; "Hosea is concise, and speaketh, as it were, in detached sayings." The words of upbraiding, of judgment, of woe, burst out, as it were, one by one, slowly, heavily, condensed, abrupt, from the Prophet's heavy and shrinking soul, as God commanded and constrained him, and put His words, like fire, in the Prophet's mouth. An image of Him Who said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would

not," he delivers his message, as though each sentence burst with a groan from his soul, and he had anew to take breath, before he uttered each renewed woe. Each verse forms a whole for itself, like one heavy toll in a funeral knell. The Prophet has not been careful about order and symmetry, so that each sentence went home to the soul. And yet the unity of the prophecy is so evident in the main, that we cannot doubt that it is not broken, even when the connection is not apparent on the surface. The great difficulty consequently in Hosea is to ascertain that connection in places where it evidently exists, yet where the Prophet has not explained it. The easiest and simplest sentences^m are sometimes, in this respect, the most difficult. It is in remarkable contrast with this abruptness in the more mournful parts, that when Hosea has a message of mercy to deliver, his style becomes easy and flowing. Then no sign of present sin or impending misery disturbs his brightness. He lives wholly in the future bliss which he was allowed to foretell. Yet, meanwhile, no prophet had a darker future to declare. The prophets of Judah could mingle with their present denunciations a prospect of an early restoration. The ten tribes, as a whole, had no future. The temporal part of their punishment was irreversible. Hosea lived almost to see its fulfillment. Yet not the less confidently does he foretell the spiritual mercies in store for his people. He promises them as absolutely as if he saw them. It is not matter of hope, but of certainty. And this certainty Hosea announces, in words expressive of the closest union with God; an union shadowed by the closest union which we know, that, whereby a man and his wife are *no more twain, but one flesh*. Here, as filled and overfilled with joy, instead of abrupt sentences, he gladly lingers on his subject, adding in every word something to the fulness of the blessing contained in the precedingⁿ. He is, indeed, (if one may venture so to speak) eminently a prophet of the tenderness of the love of God. In foretelling God's judgments, he ventures to picture Him to us, as overcome (so to speak) by mercy, so that He would not execute His full sentence^o. God's mercies he predicts in the inmost relation of love, that those whom He had rejected, He would own, as "sons of the living God;" that He would betroth them to Himself in righteousness, in judg-

^a Ib. iv. 5, 6, 13, 14. v. 3, 13. vi. 4, 5. vii. 5. ix. 10. xii. 4, 5, 9, 11. In xi. 8, 9, God speaks to them, in mitigation of His sentence; x. 9, is uncertain, but in x. 10, God speaks.

^b Hosea xi. 11.

^c Hosea iv. 1. v. 1.

^d In fifty-seven verses, iv. 5-9, 12-14. 17. v. 2, 3, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15. vi. 4-7, 10, 11. vii. 1, 2, 12-15. viii. 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 12, 14. ix. 10, 12, 15, 16. x. 10, 11. xi. 1, 3. 4. 7-9, 12. xii. 9, 10. xiii. 4, 9, 11. There are apparently only ten verses, in which the Prophet speaks of this

Lord in the third person, iv. 10. v. 4, 6, 7. ix. 3, 4. x. 12. xii. 2, 13. xiii. 15. He says, "My God" ix. 8, 17.

^e iv. 4, 17. vii. 1.

^f ix. 1, 5.

^g Hosea x. 12; (but followed by a declaration of the fruitlessness of his call 13, 15.) xii. 6.

^h Hosea iv. 13.

ⁱ See on vi. 11.

^j Hosea xiv. 1, 3.

^k Ib. xiv. 4, 8.

^l Osee commaticus est, et quasi per sententias loquitur. Pref. in xii. Proph.

^m S. Matt. xxiii. 37.

ⁿ e. g. xii. 9, 12, 13.

^o ii. 14-20. xiv. 1-7.

^p xl. 8, 9.

ment, loving-kindness, mercies, faithfulness, and that, for ever; that He would raise us up on the third day, and that we should live in His sight, ransoming us, Himself, and redeeming us, as our Kinsman, from death and the grave².

In this prophecy of the betrothal of the Church to God, he both applies and supplies the teaching of the forty-fifth Psalm and of the Song of Solomon. Moses had been taught to declare to his people that God had, in a special way, made them His people, and was Himself their God. The violation of this relation, by taking other Gods, Moses had also spoken of under the image of married faithlessness. But faithlessness implies the existence of the relation, to which they were bound to be faithful. The whole human family, however, had once belonged to God, and had fallen away from Him. And so Moses speaks of the heathen idolatry also under this name, and warned Israel against sharing their sin. "Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods,—and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods." The relation itself of betrothal Moses does not mention; yet it must have been suggested to the mind of Israel by his describing this special sin of choosing other gods, under the title of married faithlessness³ and of desertion of God⁴, and by his attributing to God the title of "Jealous."⁵ It was reserved to Hosea, to exhibit at once to Israel under this image, God's tender love for them and their ingratitude, to dwell on their relation to God Whom they forsook⁶, and explicitly to foretell to them that new betrothal in Christ which should abide for ever.

The Image, however, presupposes an acquaintance with the language of the Pentateuch; and it has been noticed that Hosea

incidentally asserts that the written Pentateuch was still used in the kingdom of Israel. For God does not say, "I have given to him," but "I have written," or "I write" to him the great⁷ or "manifold"⁸ things of the law. The "ten thousand things" which God says that He had written, cannot be the decalogue only, nor would the word "written" be used of an unwritten tradition. God says moreover, "I write," in order to express that the law, although written once for all, still came from the ever-present authority of Him Who wrote it.

The language of Hosea is, for the most part, too concise and broken, to admit of his employing actual sentences of the Pentateuch. This he does sometimes⁹, as has been pointed out⁷. On the other hand, his concise allusions would scarcely be understood by those who were not familiar with the history and laws of the Pentateuch⁴. Since then plainly a prophet spoke so as to be understood by the people, this is an evidence of the continual use of the Pentateuch in Israel, after the great schism from Judah. The schools of the Prophets, doubtless, maintained the teaching of the law, as they did the public worship. The people went to Elisha on new-moons and sabbaths, and so to other prophets also¹⁰. Even after the great massacre of the prophets by Jezebel¹¹, we have incidental notices of schools of the prophets at Bethel¹², Jericho¹³, Gilgal¹⁴, Mount Ephraim¹⁵, Samaria¹⁶, from which other schools were formed¹⁷. The selection of Gilgal, Bethel, and Samaria, shews that the spots were chosen, in order to confront idolatry and corruption in their chief abodes. The contradiction of men's lives to the law, thus extant and taught among them, could scarcely have been greater than that of Christians now to the Bible which they have in their houses and their hands and their ears, but not in their hearts.

² See on i. 10. ii. 19. sqq. vi. 2. xiii. 14.

³ Ex. xxxiv. 15, 16.

⁴ Lev. xvii. 7. xx. 5, 6. Num. xiv. 33.

⁵ Deut. xxxi. 16.

⁶ Ex. xx. 5. xxxiv. 14. Deut. iv. 24. v. 9. vi. 15. Num. xxv. 2.

⁷ The language "went a whoring from God" &c. occurs in Ps. lxxiii. 27. Hos. i. 2. iv. 12. ix. 1. not in the Pentateuch. In Ezek. xxiii. 5, "when she was Mine."

⁸ viii. 12.

⁹ lit. "ten thousand" according to the textual reading.

¹⁰ See iii. 1. iv. 8, 10. v. 6, 10, 11, 14. vi. 2, 3. x. 14. xl. 7, 8. xii. 4, 6. xiii. 6, 9. xiv. 2.

¹¹ Hengstenberg *Authentic des Pentateuches*, i. 48. sqq. although, naturally, all his instances will not seem to all to have the force of proof.

¹² See i. 10, 11. iii. 2. iv. 4, 8. viii. 6, 11, 13. ix. 3, 10. x. 4, 11. xl. 8. xii. 4-6, 10, 11, 12. xiv. 3, 4.

¹³ 2 Kgs. iv. 23. ¹⁴ 1 Kgs. xviii. 13. ¹⁵ 2 Kgs. ii. 3.

¹⁶ 1 Kgs. v. ¹⁷ Ib. iv. 38. ¹⁸ Ib. v. 22.

¹⁹ Elisha dwelt in Mount Carmel, 2 Kgs. ii. 25. iv. 25. but also at Samaria, 2 Kgs. ii. 25. (probably v. 9.) vi. 32. He had a school of "sons of the prophets" with him, vi. 1. ix. 1. ²⁰ Ib. vi. 1.

HOSEA.

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CHAPTER I.

1 *Hosea, to shew God's judgment for spiritual whoredom, taketh Gomer, 4 and hath by her Jezreel, 6 Lo-ruhamah, 8 and Lo-ammi. 10 The restoration of Judah and Israel.*

THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the

days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, *Go, take *So ch. 3. 1.

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CHAP. I., ver. 1. *The word of the Lord, that came unto Hosea.* Hosea, at the very beginning of his prophecy, declares that all this, which he delivered, came, not from his own mind but from God. As S. Paul says, *Paul an Apostle, not of men neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father.* He refers all to God, and claims all obedience to Him. That word came to him; it existed then before, in the mind of God. It was first God's, then it became the Prophet's, receiving it from God. So it is said, *the word of God came to John*¹.

Hosea, i. e. Salvation, or, the Lord saveth. The Prophet bare the name of our Lord Jesus, Whom he foretold and of Whom he was a type. *Son of Beeri, i. e. my well or welling-forth.* God ordained that the name of his father too should signify truth. From God, as from the Fountain of life, Hosea drew the living waters, which he poured out to the people. *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*².

In the days of Uzziah, &c. Hosea, although a Prophet of Israel, marks his prophecy by the names of the kings of Judah, because the kingdom of Judah was the kingdom of the theocracy, the line of David to which the promises of God were made. As Elisha, to whose office he succeeded, turned away from Jehoram³, saying, *get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother*, and owned Jehoshaphat king of Judah only, so, in the title of his prophecy, Hosea at once expresses that the kingdom of Judah alone was legitimate. He adds the name of Jeroboam, partly as the last king of Israel whom, by virtue of His promise to Jehu, God helped; partly to shew that God never left Israel unwarned. Jeroboam I. was warned first by the prophet⁴, who by his own untimely death, as well as in his prophecy, was a witness to the strictness of God's judgments, and then by Ahijah⁵; Baasha by Jehu, son of Hanani⁶; Ahab by Elijah and Micaiah son of Imla; Haziah by Elijah⁷; Jehoram by Elisha who exercised his office until the days

of Joash⁸. So, in the days of Jeroboam II, God raised up Hosea, Amos and Jonah. "The kings and people of Israel then were without excuse, since God never ceased to send His prophets among them; in no reign did the voice of the prophets fail, warning of the coming wrath of God, until it came." While Jeroboam was recovering to Israel a larger rule than it had ever had since it separated from Judah, annexing to it Damascus⁹ which had been lost to Judah even in the days of Solomon, and from which Israel had of late so greatly suffered, Hosea was sent to forewarn it of its destruction. God alone could utter "such a voice of thunder out of the midst of such a cloudless sky." Jeroboam doubtless thought that his house would, through its own strength, survive the period which God had pledged to it. "But temporal prosperity is no proof either of stability or of the favor of God. Where the law of God is observed, there, even amid the pressure of outward calamity, is the assurance of ultimate prosperity. Where God is disobeyed, there is the pledge of coming destruction. The seasons when men feel most secure against future chastisement, are often the preludes of the most signal revolutions."

2. *The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea or in Hosea.* God first revealed Himself and His mysteries to the prophet's soul, by His secret inspiration, and then declared, through him, to others, what He had deposited in him. God enlightened him, and then others through the light in him.

And the Lord said unto Hosea. For this thing was to be done by Hosea alone, because God had commanded it, not by others of their own mind. To Isaiah God first revealed Himself, as sitting in the temple, adored by the Seraphim: to Ezekiel God first appeared, as enthroned above the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies; to Jeremiah God announced that, ere yet he was born, He had sanctified him for this office: to Hosea He enjoined, as the beginning of his prophetic office, an act contrary to man's natu-

¹ S. Luke iii. 2. ² Isa. xli. 3. ³ 2 Kgs iii. 13, 14.
⁴ 1 Kgs xlii. ⁵ Ib. xiv.

⁶ Ib. xvi.

⁷ 2 Kgs i.
⁸ Ib. xiv. 23.

⁹ Ib. xlii. 14.

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^b Deut. 31. 16.
Pa. 73. 27.
Jer. 2. 13.
Ezek. 23. 3, &c.

unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great

whoredom, departing from the LORD.

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3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of

ral feelings, yet one, by which he became an image of the Redeemer, uniting to Himself what was unholy, in order to make it holy.

Go take unto thee. Since Hosea prophesied some eighty years, he must now have been in early youth, holy, pure, as became a prophet of God. Being called thus early, he had doubtless been formed by God as a chosen instrument of His will, and had, like Samuel, from his first childhood, been trained in true piety and holiness. Yet he was to unite unto him, so long as she lived, one greatly defiled, in order to win her thereby to purity and holiness; herein, a little likeness of our Blessed Lord, Who, in the Virgin's womb, to save us, espoused our flesh, in us sinful, in Him All-holy, without motion to sin; and, further, espoused the Church, formed of us who, *whether Jews or Gentiles, were all under sin*, aliens from God and gone away from Him, *serving divers lusts and passions, to make it a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle.*

A wife of whoredoms, i. e. take as a wife, one who up to that time had again and again been guilty of that sin. So *men of bloods* are "men given up to bloodshedding;" and our Lord was a *Man of Sorrows*, not occasional only, but manifold and continual, throughout His whole life. She must, then, amid the manifold corruption of Israel, have been repeatedly guilty of that sin, perhaps as an idolatress, thinking of it to be in honour of their foul gods⁴. She was not like those degraded ones, who cease to bear children; still she must have manifoldly sinned. So much the greater was the obedience of the Prophet. Nor could any other woman so shadow forth the manifold defilements of the human race, whose nature our Incarnate Lord vouchsafed to unite in His own Person to the perfect holiness of the Divine Nature.

And children of whoredoms; for they shared the disgrace of their mother, although born in lawful marriage. The sins of parents descend also, in a mysterious way, on their children. Sin is contagious, and, unless the entail is cut off by grace, hereditary. The mother thus far portrays man's revolts, before his union with God; the children, our forsaking of God, after we have been made His children. The forefathers of Israel, God tells them, *served other gods, on the other side of the flood*⁵, (i. e. in Ur of the Chaldees,

whence God called Abraham) *and in Egypt*. It was out of such defilement, that God took her⁶, and He says, *Thou becamest Mine*⁷. Whom He maketh His, He maketh pure; and of her, not such as she was in herself by nature, but as such as He made her, He says⁸, *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me, in the wilderness*. But she soon fell away; and thenceforth there were among them (as there are now among Christians,) the children of God, the children of the promise, and the children of whoredoms, or of the devil.

For the land, &c. This is the reason why God commands Hosea to do this thing, in order to shadow out their foulness and God's mercy. What no man would dare to do⁹, except at God's bidding, God in a manner doth, restoring to union with Himself those who had gone away from Him. *The land*, i. e., Israel, and indirectly, Judah also, and, more widely yet, the whole earth.

Departing from lit. from after the Lord. Our whole life should be, *forgetting the things which are behind, to follow after Him*, Whom here we can never fully attain unto, God in His Infinite Perfection, yet so as, with our whole heart, *fully to follow after Him*. To depart from the Creator and to serve the creature, is adultery; as the Psalmist says, *Thou hast destroyed all them, that go a whoring from Thee*. He who seeks any thing out of God, turns from following Him, and takes to him something else as his god, is unfaithful, and spiritually an adulterer and idolater. For he is an adulterer, who becomes another's than God's.

3. *So he went.* He did not demur, nor excuse himself, as did even Moses¹⁰, or Jeremiah¹¹, or St. Peter¹², and were rebuked for it, although mercifully by the All-Merciful. Hosea, accustomed from childhood to obey God and every indication of the Will of God, did at once, what he was bidden, however repulsive to natural feeling, and became, thereby, the more an image of the obedience of Christ Jesus, and a pattern to us, at once to believe and obey God's commands, however little to our minds.

Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. Gomer is completion; *Diblaim*, a double lump of figs; which are a figure of sweetness. These names may mean, that "the sweetness of sins is the parent of destruction;" or that Israel,

¹ Eph. v. 27

² Ps. v. 6.

³ Isa. liii. 3.

⁴ See on iv. 13, 24.

⁵ Josh. xxiv. 14.

⁶ Ezek. xxiii. 3, 8.

⁷ Ezek. xvi. 8.

⁸ Jer. ii. 2.

⁹ Ib. lii. 1.

¹⁰ Phil. iii. 13.

¹¹ Ps. lxxiii. 27.

¹² Ex. iv. 18.

¹³ Jer. i. 6.

¹⁴ Acts x. 4.

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Diblain; which conceived,
and bare him a son.

4 And the LORD said
unto him, Call his name

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Jezeel; for yet a little
while,¹ and I will † avenge
the blood of Jezeel upon
the house of Jehu,² and

¹ 2 Kings 10. 11.
† 11. ch. visit.
² 2 Kings 15. 10,
12.

or mankind had completely forsaken God, and were children of corrupting pleasure.

Holy Scripture relates that all this was done, and tells us the births and names of the children, as real history. As such then, must we receive it. We must not imagine things to be unworthy of God, because they do not commend themselves to us. God does not dispense with the moral law, because the moral law has its source in the Mind of God Himself. To dispense with it would be to contradict Himself. But God, Who is the absolute Lord of all things which He made, may, at His Sovereign Will, dispose of the lives or things which He created. Thus, as Sovereign Judge, He commanded the lives of the Canaanites to be taken away by Israel, as, in His ordinary Providence, He has ordained that the magistrate should not bear the sword in vain, but has made him His minister, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil¹. So, again, He, Whose are all things, willed to repay to the Israelites their hard and unjust servitude, by commanding them to spoil the Egyptians². He, Who created marriage, commanded to Hosea, whom he should marry. The Prophet was not defiled, by taking as his lawful wife, at God's bidding, one defiled, however hard a thing this was. "He who remains good, is not defiled by coming in contact with one evil; but the evil, following his example, is turned into good." But through his simple obedience, he foreshadowed Him, God the Word, Who was called *the Friend of publicans and sinners*; Who warned the Pharisees, that *the publicans and harlots should enter unto the kingdom of God before them*; and who now vouchsafes to espouse, dwell in, and unite Himself with, and so to hallow, our sinful souls. The acts which God enjoined to the Prophets, and which to us seem strange, must have had an impressiveness to the people, in proportion to their strangeness. The life of the Prophet became a sermon to the people. Sight impresses more than words. The Prophet, being in his own person a mirror of obedience, did moreover, by his way of life, reflect to the people some likeness of the future and of things unseen. The expectation of the people was wound up, when they saw their Prophets do things at God's command, which they themselves could not have done. When Ezekiel was bidden to shew no sign of mourning, on the sudden death of *the desire*

of his eyes, his wife; or when he dug through the wall of his house, and carried forth his household stuff in the twilight, with his face covered³; the people asked, *Will thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?* No words could so express a grief beyond all power of grieving, as Ezekiel's mute grief for one who was known to be "*the desire of his eyes*," yet for whom he was forbidden to shew the natural expressions of grief, or to use the received tokens of mourning. God Himself declares the ground of such acts to have been, that, rebellious as the house of Israel was⁴, with eyes which saw not, and ears which heard not, they might yet consider such acts as these.

4. Call his name Jezeel; i.e. in its first sense here, "God will scatter." The life of the prophet, and his union with one so unworthy of him, were a continued prophecy of God's mercy. The names of the children were a life-long admonition of His intervening judgments. Since Israel refused to hear God's words, He made the prophet's sons, through the mere fact of their presence among them, their going out and coming in, and the names which He gave them, to be preachers to the people. He depicted in them and in their names what was to be, in order that, whenever they saw or heard of them, His warnings might be forced upon them, and those who would take warning, might be saved. If, with their mother's disgrace, these sons inherited and copied their mother's sins, then their names became even more expressive, that, being such as they were, they would be scattered by God, would not be owned by God as His people, or be pitied by Him.

I will avenge the blood of Jezeel upon the house of Jehu. Yet Jehu shed this blood, the blood of the house of Ahab, of Joram and Jezebel and the seventy sons of Ahab, at God's command and in fulfillment of His Will. How was it then sin? Because, if we do what is the Will of God for any end of our own, for any thing except God, we do, in fact, our own will, not God's. It was not lawful for Jehu to depose and slay the king his master, except at the command of God, Who, as the Supreme King, sets up and puts down earthly rulers as He wills. For any other end, and done otherwise than at God's express command, such an act is sin. Jehu was rewarded for the measure in which he fulfilled God's

¹ Rom. xlii. 4. ² Ex. iii. 22. ³ S. Matt. xi. 19.
⁴ 1b. xxi. 31. ⁵ Ezek. xxiv. 16-18.

⁶ Ib. xli. 3-7.

⁷ Ib. xxiv. 19. add xli. 10.
⁸ Ib. xlii. 2.

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will cause to cease the
kingdom of the house of
Israel.

• 2 Kings 15. 29. 5 And it shall come to

commands, as Ahab who had sold himself to work wickedness, had yet a temporal reward for humbling himself publicly, when rebuked by God for his sin, and so honoring God, amid an apostate people. But Jehu, by cleaving, against the Will of God, to Jeroboam's sin, which served his own political ends, shewed that, in the slaughter of his master, he acted not, as he pretended, out of zeal¹ for the Will of God, but served his own will and his own ambition only. By his disobedience to the one command of God, he shewed that he would have equally disobeyed the other, had it been contrary to his own will of interest. He had no principle of obedience. And so the blood, which was shed according to the righteous judgment of God, became sin to him who shed it in order to fulfill, not the Will of God, but his own. Thus God said to Baasha² *I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over My people Israel, which he became by slaying his master, the son of Jeroboam, and all the house of Jeroboam.* Yet, because he followed the sins of Jeroboam³, *the word of the Lord came against Baasha, for all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him.* The two courses of action were inconsistent; to destroy the son and the house of Jeroboam, and to do those things, for which God condemned him to be destroyed. Further yet. Not only was such execution of God's judgments itself an offence against Almighty God, but it was sin, whereby he condemned himself, and made his other sins to be sins against the light. In executing the judgment of God against another, he pronounced His judgment against himself, in that he *that judged, in God's stead, did the same things*⁴. So awful a thing is it, to be the instrument of God in punishing or reproofing others, if we do not, by His grace, keep our own hearts and hands pure from sin.

And will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. Not the kingdom of the house of Jehu, but all Israel. God had promised that the family of Jehu should sit on the throne to the fourth generation. Jeroboam II., the third of these, was now reigning over Israel, in the fulness of his might. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath⁵, i. e. from the Northern extremity,

pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

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near Mount Hermon, where Palestine joins on to Syria, and, which Solomon only in all his glory had won for Israel⁶, unto the sea of the plain, the Dead sea, regaining all which Hazael had conquered⁷, and even subduing Moab also⁸, according to the word of the Lord by Jonah the son of Amittai. He had recovered to Israel, Damascus, which had been lost to Judah, ever since the close of the reign of Solomon⁹. He was a warlike prince, like that first Jeroboam, who had formed the strength and the sin of the ten tribes. Yet both his house and his kingdom fell with him. The whole history of that kingdom afterwards is little more than that of the murder of one family by another, such as is spoken of in the later chapters of Hosea; and Israel, i. e. the ten tribes, were finally carried captive, fifty years after the death of Zechariah, Jeroboam's son. Of so little account is any seeming prosperity or strength.

5. I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. The valley of Jezreel is a beautiful and a broad valley or plain, stretching, from W. to E., from Mount Carmel and the sea to the Jordan, which it reaches through two arms, between the Mountains of Gilboa, little Hermon, and Tabor; and from S. to N. from the Mountains of Ephraim to those of Galilee. Nazareth lay on its Northern side. It is called "¹⁰the great plain," "¹¹the great plain of Esdraelon." There God had signally executed His judgments against the enemies of His people, or on His people, when they became His enemies. There He gave the great victories over the invading hosts of Sisera¹², and of Midian, with the children of the East¹³. There also He ended the life and kingdom of Saul¹⁴, visiting upon him, when his measure of iniquity was full, his years of contumacy, and his persecution of David, whom God had chosen. Jezreel became a royal residence of the house of Ahab¹⁵. There, in the scenes of Ahab's wickedness and of Jehu's hypocritical zeal; there, where he drove furiously, to avenge, as he alleged, on the house of Ahab, the innocent blood which Ahab had shed in Jezreel, Hosea foretells that the kingdom of Israel should be broken. In the same plain, at the battle with Shalmaneser, near Betharbel¹⁶, Hosea lived to see his prophecy fulfilled. The strength of the kingdom was

¹² 2 Kings x. 10. ¹¹ 1 Kings xvi. 2. ¹³ Jb. xvi. 7.

¹⁴ Rom. ii. 1. ¹⁵ 2 Kings xiv. 25. ¹⁶ 2 Chr. viii. 3, 4.

¹⁷ 2 Kings x. 32, 33. ¹⁸ See on Am. vi. 14.

¹⁹ 1 Kings xli. 24. ²⁰ 1 Macc. xii. 49.

²¹ Judith i. 8. ²² Jud. iv. 4 sqq.

²³ Jud. vi. 33.

²⁴ 1 Sam. xxix. l. xxxi. 1, 7, 10.

²⁵ 1 Kings xviii. 46. xxi. 1, 2, 3. 2 Kings ix. 10, 26, 30. x. 1, 11.

²⁶ See on x. 14.

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6 ¶ And she conceived again, and bare a daughter.

[That is, *Not having obtained mercy.* And God said unto him, Call her name || Lo-ruha-

2 Kings 17. 6, mah: 'for † I will no more

† Heb. *I will not add any more to.* have mercy upon the house

Or, that I should altogether pardon them. of Israel; || but I will utterly take them away.

there finally broken; the sufferings there endured were one last warning before the capture of Samaria¹.

The name of Jezreel blends the sins with the punishment. It resembles, in form and in sound, the name of Israel, and contains a reversal of the promise contained in the name of Israel, in which they trusted. *Yisrael* (as their name was originally pronounced²) signifies, *he is a prince with God; Yidsreel, God shall scatter.* They who, while they followed the faith, for which their forefather Jacob received from God the name of Israel, had been truly Israel, i. e. "princes with God," should now be *Yidsreel*, "scattered by God."

6. *Call her name Lo-ruhamah.* The name is rendered in St. Paul³, *not beloved*, in St. Peter⁴, *hath not obtained mercy.* Love and mercy are both contained in the full meaning of the intensive form of the Hebrew word, which expresses the deep tender yearnings of the inmost soul over one loved; as in the words, "*As a father pitieth [yearneth over] his own children, so the Lord pitieth [yearneth over] them that fear Him.*" It is tender love in Him Who pitieth; mercy, as shewn to him who needeth mercy. The punishment, foretold under the name of the daughter, *Unpitied*, is a great enlargement of that conveyed under the name of the first son, *God shall scatter.* Judah too was carried captive, and scattered; but after the 70 years, she was restored. The 10 tribes, it is now foretold, when scattered, should, as a whole, be cut off from the tender mercy of God, scattered by Him, and as a whole, never be restored. Those only were restored, who, when Judah returned from captivity, clave to her, or subsequently, one by one, were united to her.

But I will utterly take them away. Lit., *for, taking away, I will take away from them, or with regard to them, viz., everything.* He

¹ See on x. 15.

² The two names would either be pronounced, *Yisrael, Yidsreel*; or both, *Israel, Idsreel.*

³ Romans ix. 25.

⁴ 1 S. Peter ii. 10.

⁵ Ps. ciii. 13.

⁶ This mode of speech is often used in Holy Scripture. First, a negative is used; then, the opposite is said in this emphatic way affirmatively, *Thou shalt not spare him, for killing thou shalt kill him,* Deut. xiii. 8, 9. [9, 10. Heb.] *Thou shalt not*

7 ¶ But I will have mercy upon the house of Ju-

dah, and will save them : 2 Kings 19. 35.

by the LORD their God, and ^bwill not save them ^bZech. 4. 6. & 9.

by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses nor by horsemen.

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specifies nothing; He excepts nothing; only, with that awful emphasis, He dwells on the taking away, as that which He had determined to do to the utmost. This is the thought, which He wills to dwell on the mind. As a little while after, God says, that He would be nothing to them, so here, where He in fact repeats this one thought, *take away, take away, from them*, the guilty conscience of Israel would at once, supply, "all." When God threatens, the sinful or awakened soul sees instinctively what draws down the lightning of God's wrath, and where it will fall.

7. *I will have mercy on the house of Judah.* For to them the promises were made in David, and of them, according to the flesh, Christ was to come. Israel, moreover, as being founded in rebellion and apostacy, had gone on from bad to worse. All their kings clave to the sin of Jeroboam; not one did right in the sight of God; not one repented or hearkened to God. Whereas Judah, having the true Worship of God, and the reading of the law, and the typical sacrifices, through which it looked on to the great Sacrifice for sin, was on the whole, a witness to the truth of God¹.

And will save them by the Lord their God, not by bow, &c. Shortly after this, God did, in the reign of Hezekiah, save them by Himself from Sennacherib, when the Angel of the Lord smote in one night 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. "Neither in that night, nor when they were freed from the captivity at Babylon, did they bend bow or draw sword against their enemies or their captors. While they slept, the Angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrians. At the prayers of David and the prophets and holy men, yea, and of the angels² too, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, to set them free to go up to Jerusalem, and build the temple of the Lord God of Israel³.

escape out of his hand; for, taking, thou shalt be taken. Jer. xxxiv. 3. *We will not hearken unto thee; for, doing, we will do whatsoever,* &c. Ib. xlii. 17. Add Jer. xlix. 12. Ex. xix. 13. Deut. xx. 17. This uniform usage, doubtless, determined our Translators to prefer the rendering of the text to that in the margin, "That I should altogether pardon them," which would require the two 'J's to be taken in different senses.

¹ See on xi. 12.

² Zech. i. 12.

³ Ezr. i. 3.

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8 ¶ Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

But much more, this is the special promise of the Gospel, that God would deliver, not outwardly, but inwardly; not by human wars, but in peace; not by man, but by Himself. *By the Lord their God*, by Himself Who is speaking, or, The Father by the Son, (in like way as it is said, *The Lord rained upon Sodom fire from the Lord.*) They were saved in Christ, the Lord and God of all, not by carnal weapons of warfare, but by the might of Him Who saved them, and shook thrones and dominions, and Who by His own Cross triumpheth over the hosts of the adversaries, and overthroweth the powers of evil, and giveth to those who love Him, to tread on serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy. They were saved, not for any merits of their own, nor for anything in themselves. But when human means, and man's works, such as he could do of his own free-will, and the power of his understanding, and the natural impulses of his affections, had proved unavailing, then He redeemed them by His Blood, and bestowed on them gifts and graces above nature, and filled them with His Spirit, and gave them to *will and to do of His good pleasure*. But this promise also was, and is, to the true Judah, i. e. to those who, as the name means, *confess and praise God*, and who, receiving Christ, Who, as Man, was of the tribe of Judah, became His children, being re-born by His Spirit."

8. *Now when she had weaned, &c.* Eastern women very commonly nursed their children two, or even three² years. The weaning then of the child portrays a certain interval of time between these two degrees of chastisement; but after this reprieve, the last and final judgment pictured here was to set in irreversibly.

9. *Call his name Lo-ammi, i. e. not My people.* The name of this third child expresses the last final degree of chastisement. As the *scattering by God* did not involve the being wholly *unpitied*; so neither did the being wholly *unpitied* for the time involve the being wholly rejected, so as to be *no more His people*. There were corresponding degrees in the actual history of the kingdom of Israel. God withdrew his protection by degrees. Under Jeroboam, in whose reign was this beginning of Hosea's prophecy, the people was yet outwardly strong. This strength has been thought to be expressed by the sex of the eldest child, that he was a son. On this, followed extreme weakness,

¹ Gen. xix. 24.

² 2 Macc. vii. 27.

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9 Then said God, Call his name || Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. *That is, Not my people.*

full of mutual massacre and horrible cruelty, first, in a long anarchy, then under Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hosea, within, and through the invasions of Pul, Tiglathpileser, Shalmaneser, kings of Assyria, from without. The sex of the daughter, *Lo Ruhamah, Unpitied*, corresponds with this increasing weakness, and breaking of the spirit. 3. When she was *weaned*, i. e. when the people were deprived of all consolation and all the spiritual food whereby they had hitherto been supported, prophecy, teaching, promises, sacrifices, grace, favour, consolation, it became wholly *Lo-ammi, not My people*. As a distinct part of God's people, it was cast off for ever; and yet it became outwardly strong, as the Jews became powerful, and often were the persecutors of the Christians. The same is seen in individuals. God often first chastens them lightly, then more heavily, and brings them down in their iniquities; but if they still harden themselves, He withdraws both His chastisements and His grace, so that the sinner even prospers in this world, but, remaining finally impenitent, is cast off for ever.

I will not be your God; lit. *I will not be to you, or, for you; for you*, by Providence; to you, by love. The words say the more through their silence. They do not say what God will not be to those who had been His people. They do not say that He will not be their Defender, Nourisher, Saviour, Deliverer, Father, Hope, Refuge; and so they say that He will be none of these, which are all included in the English, *I will not be your God*. For, as God, He is these, and all things, to us. *I will not be to you*. God, by His love, vouchsafes to give all and to take all. He gives Himself wholly to His own, in order to make them wholly His. He makes an exchange with them. As God the Son, by His Incarnation, took the Manhood into God, so, by His Spirit dwelling in them, He makes men gods, *partakers of the Divine Nature*³. They, by His adoption, belong to Him; He, by His promise and gift, belongs to them. He makes them His; He becomes their's. This mutual exchange is so often expressed in Holy Scripture, to shew how God loveth to give Himself to us, and to make us His; and that where the one is, there is the other; nor can the one be without the other. This was the original covenant with Israel: *I will be your God, and you shall be My people*⁴;

³ 2 S. Pet. i. 4.

⁴ Lev. xxvi. 12. add Ex. vi. 7.

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10 ¶ Yet 'the number
of the children of Israel

¹ Gen. 32. 12.
² Rom. 9. 27, 28.

shall be as the sand of the
sea, which cannot be mea-
sured or numbered; *and
it shall come to pass, that

* Rom. 9. 25, 26.
1 Pet. 2. 10.

and as such, it is often repeated in Jeremiah¹ and Ezekiel². Afterwards, this is expressed still more affectionately. *I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters*³. And in Christ the Son, God saith, *I will be his Father, and he shall be My son*⁴. God, Who saith not this to any out of Christ, nor even to the holy Angels, (as it is written⁵, *Unto which of the Angels said He at any time, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son?*) saith it to us in Christ. And so, in turn, the Church and each single soul which is His, saith, or rather He saith it in them⁶, *My beloved is mine, and I am His*, and more boldly yet, *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine*⁷. Whence also at the Holy Communion we say, "then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us;" and we pray that "we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us."

10. Yet [lit. and] the number of the children of Israel, &c. Light springeth out of darkness; joy out of sorrow; mercy out of chastisement; life out of death. And so Holy Scripture commonly, upon the threat of punishment, promises blessings to the penitent. "Very nigh to the severest displeasure is the dispersion of sorrows and the promised close of darkness." What God takes away, He replaces with usury; things of time by things eternal; outward goods and gifts and privileges by inward; an earthly kingdom by Heaven. Both St. Peter⁸ and St. Paul⁹ tell us that this prophecy is already, in Christ, fulfilled in those of Israel, who were the true Israel, or of the Gentiles, to whom the promise was made¹⁰, *In thy Seed shall all the nations be blessed*, and who, whether Jews or Gentiles, believed in Him. The Gentiles were adopted into the Church, which, at the Day of Pentecost, was formed of the Jews, and in which Jews and Gentiles became one in Christ¹¹. Yet of the Jews alone, not only did many tens of thousands in Jerusalem believe¹², but S. Peter and S. James both write to the dispersed of the ten tribes¹³; and the Apostles themselves were Jews. Although, then, those Jews who believed in Christ were few in comparison of those who rejected Him, yet they were, in themselves, many, and,

¹ Jer. xl. 4, 5. xxiv. 7. xxx. 22. xxxi. 1, 33. xxxii. 38.

² Ezek. xi. 20. xiv. 11. xxxvi. 28. xxxvii. 23, 27.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 18. ⁴ 2 Sam. vii. 14. ⁵ Heb. i. 5.

⁶ Cant. ii. 16. ⁷ Ib. vi. 3. ⁸ 1 S. Pet. ii. 10.

|| in the place where it was

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said unto them, 'Ye are
not my people, there it shall
be said unto them, Ye are
the sons of the living
God.

Or, instead of
that.
ch. 2. 23.

¹ John 1. 12.
² John 3. 1.

through those who, in Christ Jesus, were begotten by them *through the Gospel*¹⁴, they were numberless. Yet this prophecy, although accomplished in part, will, according to S. Paul¹⁵, be yet more completely fulfilled in the end.

In the place where it was said [or where it shall be said, i. e. at the first] unto them, ye are not My people, there it shall, in after-time, be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living God. Both the times here spoken of by the Prophet were yet future; for Israel, although they had apostatised from God, had not yet been disowned by God, Who was still sending to them prophets, to reclaim them. They ceased to be owned as God's people, when, being dispersed abroad, they had no share in the sacrifices, no Temple-worship, no prophets, no typical reconciliation for sin. God took no more notice of them than the heathen. The Prophet then speaks of two futures; one, when it shall be said to them, ye are not My people; and a yet further future, in which it should be said, ye are the sons of the living God. The place of both was to be the same. The place of their rejection, the dispersion, was to be the place of their restoration. And so S. Peter says that this Scripture was fulfilled in them, while still scattered abroad through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The place, then, where they shall be called the sons of the living God, is, wheresoever they should believe in Christ. Although separated in body, they were united by faith. And so it shall be unto the end. "Nothing now constraineth to go up to Jerusalem, and still to seek for the temple of stones; for neither will they worship God, as aforesaid, by sacrifices of sheep or oxen; but their worship will be faith in Christ and in His commandments, and the sanctification in the Spirit, and the regeneration through Holy Baptism, making the glory of sonship their's, who are worthy thereof and are called thereto by the Lord¹⁶."

It shall be said, ye are the sons of the living God. It was the special sin of Israel, the source of all his other sins, that he had left the living God, to serve dead idols. In the times of the Gospel, not only should he own God

⁹ Rom. ix. 25, 6.

¹¹ Gal. iii. 28.

¹² S. James i. 1, 1 S. Pet. i. 1.

¹³ Rom. xi. 25, 6.

¹⁰ Gen. xxii. 18.

¹² Acts xxi. 20.

¹⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 15.

¹⁵ S. Cyr.

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^a Isa. 11, 12, 13.
^b Jer. 3, 18.
^c Ezek. 34, 23, &
37, 16-24.

11 "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint

themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

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as his God, but he should have the greatest of all gifts, that the *living God*, the fountain of all life, of the life of nature, of grace, of glory, should be his Father, and as being his Father, should communicate to him that life, which He has and is. For He Who Is Life, imparts life. God doth not only pour into the souls of His elect, grace and faith, hope and love, or all the manifold gifts of His Spirit, but He, the *living God*, maketh them to be His living sons, by His Spirit dwelling in them, by Whom He adopteth them as His sons, through Whom He giveth them grace. For by His Spirit He adopteth them as sons. ¹ *We have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ.* God not only giveth us grace, but adopteth us as sons. He not only accounteth us, but He maketh us sons; He maketh us sons, not outwardly, but inwardly; not by inward grace only, but by His Spirit: not only by the birth from the Spirit, but in the Only-Begotten Son; sons of God, because members of Christ, the Son of God; sons of God, by adoption, as Christ is by Nature; but actual sons of God, as Christ is actually and eternally the Son of God. God is our Father, not by nature, but by grace; yet He is really our Father, since we are born of Him, *sons of the living God*, born of the Spirit. He giveth us of His Substance, His Nature, although not by nature; not united with us, (as it is, personally, with His Son,) but dwelling in us, and making us *partakers of the Divine Nature*. *Sons of the living God* must be living by Him and to Him, by His life, yea, through Himself living in them, as our Saviour saith², *If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.*

11. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together. A little image of this union was seen after the captivity in Babylon, when some of the children of Israel, i. e. of the ten tribes, were united to Judah on his return, and the great schism of the two kingdoms came to an end. More fully, both literal Judah and Israel were gathered into one in the one Church of Christ, and all the spiritual Judah and Israel; i. e. as many of the Gentiles as, by following the

faith, became the sons of faithful Abraham, and heirs of the promise to him.

And shall make themselves one Head. The act of God is named first, *they shall be gathered*; for without God we can do nothing. Then follows the act of their own consent, *they shall make themselves one Head*; for without us God doth nothing in us. God gathereth, by the call of His grace; they make to themselves one Head, by obeying His call, and submitting themselves to Christ, the one Head of the mystical body, the Church, who are His members. In like way, Ezekiel foretells of Christ, of the seed of David, under the name of David³; *I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; and I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a Prince among them*; and again⁴; *I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.* But this was not wholly fulfilled, until Christ came; for after the captivity they were under Zorobabel as chief, and Joshua as High-Priest.

And shall come up out of the land. To come up or go up is a title of dignity; whence, in our time, people are said to go up to the metropolis, or the University; and in Holy Scripture, to "come up," or "go up," out of Egypt⁵, or Assyria⁶, or Babylon⁷, to the land of promise, or from the rest of the land to the place which God chose⁸ to place His name there, Shiloh⁹, or, afterwards, Jerusalem¹⁰; and it is foretold that *the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted above the hills; and many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord*¹¹. The land from which they should go up is, primarily and in image, Babylon, whence God restored the two tribes; but, in truth and fully, it is the whole aggregate of lands, the earth, the great city of confusion, which Babel designates. Out of which they shall go up, "not with their feet but with their affections," to the city set upon a hill¹², the heavenly Jerusalem¹³ and Heaven itself, where we are made to sit together with Christ¹⁴, and where our conversation is¹⁵, that where He is, there may we His servants be¹⁶. They ascend in mind above the earth and the

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

² S. John xiv. 23.

³ 1b. xxxvii. 22.

⁴ 2 Kgs xvii. 3. xviii. 9, 13. Isa. xxxv. 1, 10.

⁵ 2 Kgs xxiv. 1. Ezr. ii. 1. vii. 6. Neh. vii. 6. xii. 1.

⁶ Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.

⁷ Gen. xlii. 1. xlv. 23. &c.

⁸ 2 Kgs xvii. 3. xviii. 9, 13. Isa. xxxv. 1, 10.

⁹ 2 Kgs xxiv. 1. Ezr. ii. 1. vii. 6. Neh. vii. 6. xii. 1.

¹⁰ Ex. xxxiv. 24.

¹¹ 2 Sam. xix. 34. 1 Kgs xii. 27, 28.

¹² Isa. ii. 2. 3. Mic. iv. 1, 2.

¹³ Heb. xii. 22.

¹⁴ Phil. iii. 20.

¹⁵ 1 Sam. i. 22.

¹⁶ Ps. cxxii. 4, &c.

¹⁷ Matt. v. 14.

¹⁸ Eph. ii. 6.

¹⁹ S. John xii. 26.

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CHAPTER II.

- 1 *The idolatry of the people.* 6
God's judgments against them.
14 *His promises of reconcilia-
tion with them.*

That is, *My
people.*
That is,
*Having ob-
tained mercy.*

SAY ye unto your breth-
ren, || Ammi; and to
your sisters, || Ruhamah.

things of earth, and the lowness of carnal desires, that so they may, in the end, come up out of the earth, to meet the Lord in the air, and for ever be with the Lord¹.

For great is the day of Jezreel. God had denounced woe on Israel, under the names of the three children of the prophet, Jezreel, Lo-Ammi, Lo-Ruhamah; and now, under those three names, He promises the reversal of that sentence, in Christ. He begins with the name, under which He had begun to pronounce the woe, the first son, Jezreel. Jezreel means *God shall sow*, either for increase, or to scatter. When God threatened, Jezreel necessarily meant, *God shall scatter*; here, when God reverses His threatening, it means, *God shall sow*. But the issue of the seed is either single, as in human birth, or manifold, as in the seed-corn. Hence it is used either of Him Who was eminently, the *Seed of Abraham*, the *Seed of the woman*, or of the manifold harvest, which He, the seed-corn², should bring forth, when sown in the earth, by His vicarious Death. It means, then, Christ or His Church. Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God before all worlds, was, in time, also "conceived by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary," the Son of God Alone, in a way in which no other man was born of God. Great then should be the day, when "God should sow," or give the increase in mercy, as before He scattered them, in His displeasure. The great Day wherein God should sow, was, first, the day which the Lord hath made³, the Incarnation, in which God the Son became Man, the seed of the woman; then, it was the Passion, in which, like a seed-corn, He was sown in the earth; then, the Resurrection, when He rose, the Firstborn among many brethren; then, all the days in which He bore much fruit. It is the one day of salvation, in which, generation after generation, a new seed hath been or shall be born unto Him, and shall serve Him⁴. Even unto the end, every time of any special growth of the Church, every conversion of Heathen tribe or people, is a day of Jezreel, a day in which "the Lord soweth." Great, wonderful, glorious, thrice-blessed is the day of Christ; for in it He hath

2 Plead with your mother, plead; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whore. doms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

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Isal. 50. 1.

Ezek. 16. 25.

done great things for us, gathering together under Himself, the Head, those scattered abroad, without hope and without God in the world; making "not My people" into "My people" and those not beloved into His beloved, the objects of His tender, yearning compassion, full of His grace and mercy. For so it follows,

II. 1. Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi, i. e. My people, and to your sisters, Ruhamah, i. e. beloved or tenderly pitied. The words form a climax of the love of God. First, the people scattered⁵, unpitied⁶, and disowned by God⁷, is re-born of God; then it is declared to be in continued relation to God, My people; then to be the object of his yearning love. The words, My people, may be alike filled up, "ye are My people," and "be ye My people." They are words of hope in prophecy, "ye shall be again My people;" they become words of joy in each stage of fulfillment. They are words of mutual joy and gratulation, when obeyed; they are words of encouragement, until obeyed. God is reconciled to us, and willet that we be reconciled to Him. Among those who already are God's people, they are the voice of the joy of mutual love in the oneness of the Spirit of adoption; we are His people; to those without (whether the ten tribes, or the Jews or heretics,) they are the voice of those who know in Whom they have believed, Be ye also His people. "Despair of the salvation of none, but, with brotherly love, call them to repentance and salvation."

This verse closes what went before, as God's reversal of His own sentence, and anticipates what is to come⁸. God commands the prophets and all those who love Him, to appeal to those who forget Him, holding out to them the mercy in store for them also, if they will return to Him. He bids them not to despise those yet alien from Him, "but to treat as brethren and sisters, those whom God willet to introduce into His house, and to call to the riches of His inheritance."

2. Plead with your mother, plead. The prophets close the threats of coming judgments with the dawn of after-hopes; and from hopes

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 17.
² Ps. cxviii. 24.

³ 8. John xii. 24.
⁴ Ps. xxii. 30, 31.

⁵ Jezreel.
⁷ Lo-Ammi.

⁶ Lo-Ruhamah.
⁸ v. 14 sqq.

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3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and

* Jer. 13. 22, 26.
* Ezek. 16. 37, 39.
* Ezek. 16. 4.

they go back to God's judgments against sin, pouring in wine and oil into the wounds of sinners. The mother is the Church or nation; the sons, are its members, one by one. These, when turned to God, must plead with their mother, that she turn also. When involved in her judgments, they must plead with her, and not accuse God. God had not forgotten to be gracious; but she "kept not His love, and refused His friendship, and despised the purity of spiritual communion with Him, and would not travail with the fruit of His Will." "The sons differ from the mother, as the inventor of evil from those who imitate it. For as, in good, the soul which, from the Spirit of God, conceiveth the word of truth, is the mother, and whoso profiteth by hearing the word of doctrine from her mouth, is the child, so, in evil, whatsoever soul inventeth evil is the mother, and whoso is deceived by her is the son. So in Israel, the adulterous mother was the Synagogue, and the individuals deceived by her were the sons."

"Ye who believe in Christ, and are both of Jews and Gentiles, say ye to the broken branches and to the former people which is cast off, *My people*, for it is your brother; and *Beloved*, for it is your sister. For when the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in, then shall all Israel be saved. In like way we are bidden not to despair of heretics, but to incite them to repentance, and with brotherly love to long for their salvation."

For she is not *My wife*. God speaketh of the spiritual union between Himself and His people whom He had chosen, under the terms of the closest human oneness, of husband and wife. She was no longer united to Him by faith and love, nor would He any longer own her. Plead therefore with her earnestly as orphans, who, for her sins, have lost the protection of their Father.

Let her therefore put away her whoredoms. So great is the tender mercy of God. He says, let her but put away her defilements, and she shall again be restored, as if she had never fallen; let her but put away all objects of attachment, which withdrew her from God, and God will again be All to her.

Adulteries, whoredoms. God made the soul for Himself; He betrothed her to Himself through the gift of the Holy Spirit; He united her to Himself. All love, then, out of God, is to take another, instead of God. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is

make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

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* Ezek. 19. 13.
* Amos 8. 11, 13.

none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. Adultery is to become another's than His, the Only Lord and Husband of the soul. Whoredom is to have many other objects of sinful love. Love is one, for One. The soul which has forsaken the One, is drawn hither and thither, has manifold objects of desire, which displace one another, because none satisfies. Hence the prophet speaks of "fornications, adulteries," because the soul, which will not rest in God, seeks to distract herself from her unrest and unsatisfiedness, by heaping to herself manifold lawless pleasures, out of, and contrary to the Will of, God.

From before her, lit. from her face. The face is the seat of modesty, shame, or shamelessness. Hence in Jeremiah God says to Judah, "Thou hadst a harlot's forehead; thou refusedst to be ashamed; and they were not at all ashamed, neither will they blush. The eyes, also, are the windows, through which death, i. e. lawless desire, enters into the soul, and takes it captive."

From her breasts. These are exposed, adorned, degraded in disorderly love, which they are employed to allure. Beneath too lies the heart, the seat of the affections. It may mean then, that she should no more gaze with pleasure on the objects of her sin, nor allow her heart to dwell on things which she loved sinfully. Whence it is said of the love of Christ, which should keep the soul free from all unruly passions which might offend him, "My Well-beloved shall lie all night betwixt my breasts, as a seal upon the heart beneath."

3. Lest I strip her naked. "There is an outward visible nakedness, and an inward, which is invisible. The invisible nakedness is, when the soul within is bared of the glory and the grace of God." The visible nakedness is the privation of God's temporal and visible gifts, the goods of this world, or outward distinction. God's inward gifts the sinful soul or nation despises, while those outward gifts she prizes. And therefore, when the soul parts with the inward ornaments of God's grace, He strips her of the outward, His gifts of nature, of His Providence and of His Protection, if so be, through her outward misery and shame and poverty, she may come to feel that deeper misery and emptiness and disgrace within, which she had had no heart to feel. So, when our first parents lost the robe of innocence, they knew that they were naked."

¹ Rup.
² S. Jer.

³ Rom. xi. 25, 26.
⁴ Jer. lii. 3.

⁵ Ib. vi. 15.
⁶ Ib. viii. 6.

⁷ Ib. ix. 21.
⁸ Cant. i. 13.
⁹ Gen. iii. 7.

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4 And I will not have
mercy upon her children ;

for they be the "children
of whoredoms.

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s. John 8. 41.

And set her, (lit. "I will fix her," so that she shall have no power to free herself, but must remain as a gazing stock,) as in the day that she was born, i. e. helpless, defiled, uncleansed, uncared for, unformed, cast out and loathsome. Such she was in Egypt, which is in Holy Scripture spoken of, as her birth-place¹; for there she first became a people; thence the God of her fathers called her to be His people. There she was naked of the grace and of the love of God, and of the wisdom of the law; indwelt by an evil spirit, as being an idolatress; without God; and under hard bondage, in works of mire and clay, to Pharaoh, the type of Satan, and her little ones a prey. For when a soul casts off the defence of heavenly grace, it is an easy prey to Satan.

*And make her as a wilderness, and set her as a dry land, and slay her with thirst. The outward desolation, which God inflicts, is a picture of the inward. Drought and famine are among the four sore judgments, with which God threatened the land, and our Lord forewarned them, ² Your house is left unto you desolate; and Isaiah says, ³ Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee. But the Prophet does not say, make her a wilderness, but make her as a wilderness. The soul of the sinner is solitary and desolate, for it has not the presence of God; unfruitful, bearing briars and thorns only, for it is unbedewed by God's grace, unwatered by the Fountain of living waters; athirst, not with thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord, yet also, burning with desire, which the soul streams of this world's pleasure never slake. In contrast with such thirst, Jesus says of the Holy Spirit which He would give to them that believe in Him, *Whosoever drinketh of the water, that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water, that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life*⁴.*

⁵ But was not that certain, which God had said, *I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel?* How then does God recall it, saying, *'Let her put away her fornications, &c. lest I do to her this or that which I have spoken?'* This is not unlike to that, when sentence had been passed on Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel saying, *This is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my Lord the king; they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling; the same Daniel says, Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and redeem*

*thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy on the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*⁶. What should we learn hereby, but that it hangs upon our own will, whether God suspend the judgment or no? For we ought not to impute our own evil to God, or impiously think that fate rules us. In other words, this or that evil comes, not because God foreknew or fore-ordained it; but, because this evil was to be, or would be done, therefore God both foreknew it, and prefixed His sentence upon it. Why then does God predetermine an irrevocable sentence? Because He foresaw incorrigible malice. Why, again, after pronouncing sentence, doth God counsel amendment? That we may know by experience, that they are incorrigible. Therefore, He waits for them, although they will not return, and with much patience invites them to repentance." Individuals also repented, although the nation was incorrigible.

4. *I will not have mercy upon her children.* God visits the sins of the parents upon the children, until the entailed curse be cut off by repentance. God enforces His own word *lo-ruhamah, Unpitied*, by repeating it here, *lo-arahem, "I will not pity."* Reproaches, which fall upon the mother, are ever felt with especial keenness. Whence Saul called Jonathan, ⁷ *Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman.* Therefore, the more to arouse them, he says, *for they are the children of whoredoms, evil children of an evil parent*, as S. John Baptist calls the hypocritical Jews, *ye generation of vipers*⁸. "They were, from their very birth and swaddling-clothes, never touching any work of piety, nor cultivating any grace." As of Christ, and of those who, in Him, are nourished up in deeds of righteousness, it is said, *I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art my God from my mother's belly*; so, contrariwise, of the ungodly it is said, *The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.* And as they who live honestly, as in the day and in the light, are called *children of the day and of the light*, so they who live a defiled life are called the *children of whoredoms*. ⁹ To call them *children of whoredoms* is all one with saying, that they too are incorrigible or unchangeable. For of such, Wisdom, after saying, *executing Thy judgments upon them by little and little, added forthwith, not being ignorant that they were a naughty generation, and that their malice was bred in them, and that their cogitation would never be changed, for it was a*

¹ Ezek. xvi. 4.
² Is. ix. 15.

² S. Matt. xxiii. 38.
³ S. John iv. 14. vii. 38, 39.

⁶ Rup. ⁷ Dan. iv. 24, 25, 27. ⁸ 1 Sam. xx. 30.
⁹ S. Matt. iii. 7. ⁹ Wisd. xii. 10, 11.

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5 ^aFor their mother
hath played the harlot:

^aIsa. 1. 21.
Jer. 3. 1, 6, 8, 9,
Ezek. 16. 15, 18,
&c.

she that conceived them
hath done shamefully: for
she said, I will go after my
lovers, 'that give me my
bread and my water, my

¹Jer. 8. 12.
Jer. 44. 17.

cursed seed from the beginning. All this is here expressed briefly by this word, *that they are the children of whoredoms*, meaning that their malice too was inbred, and that they, as much as the Ammorite and Hittite, were a *cursed seed*. Nor yet, in so speaking, did he blame the nature which God created, but he vehemently reproves the abuse of nature, that malice, which cleaves to nature but was no part of it, was by custom changed into nature."

5. *She that conceived them hath done shamefully*, lit. *hath made shameful*. The silence as to what she made shameful is more emphatic than any words. She made shameful every thing which she could make shameful, her acts, her children, and herself.

I will go [lit. *let me go, I would go*] *after my lovers*. The Hebrew word *Meahabim* denotes intense passionate love; the plural form implies that they were sinful loves. Every word aggravates the shamelessness. Amid God's chastisements, she encourages herself, *Come, let me go*, as people harden and embolden, and, as it were, lash themselves into further sin, lest they should shrink back, or stop short in it. *Let me go after*. She waits not, as it were, to be enticed, allured, seduced. She herself, uninvited, unbidden, unsought, contrary to the wont and natural feeling of woman, follows after those by whom she is not drawn, and refuses to follow God Who would draw her¹. The *lovers* are, whatever a man loves and courts, out of God. They were the idols and false gods, whom the Jews, like the heathen, took to themselves, besides God. But in truth they were devils. Devils she sought; the will of devils she followed; their pleasure she fulfilled, abandoning herself to sin, shamefully filled with all wickedness, and travailing with all manner of impurity. These she professed that she loved, and that they, not God, loved her. For whoever receives the gifts of God, except from God and in God's way, receives them from devils. Whoso seeks what God forbids, seeks it from Satan, and holds that Satan, not God, loves him; since God refuses it, Satan encourages him to possess himself of it. Satan, then, is his lover.

That gave me my bread and my water. The

wool and my flax, mine oil
and my † drink.

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6 ¶ Therefore, behold, † Heb. *drinks*.
^aI will hedge up thy way^a Job 3. 23. & 19.
with thorns, and † make a⁸
wall, that she shall not find † Heb. *wall a*
her paths.⁸ wall.

sense of human weakness abides, even when Divine love is gone. The whole history of man's superstitions is an evidence of this, whether they have been the mere instincts of nature, or whether they have attached themselves to religion or irreligion, Jewish or Pagan or Mohammedan, or have been practised by half-Christians. "She is conscious that she hath not these things by her own power, but is beholden to some other for them; but not remembering Him (as was commanded) Who had given her power to get wealth, and richly all things to enjoy, she professes them to be the gifts of her lovers." *Bread and water, wool and flax*, express the necessities of life, food and clothing; *mine oil and my drink* [Heb. *drinks*], its luxuries. Oil includes also ointments, and so served both for health, food and medicine, for anointing the body, and for perfume. In perfumes and choice drinks, the rich people of Israel were guilty of great profusion; whence it is said, *He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich*². For such things alone, the things of the body, did Israel care. Ascribing them to her false gods, she loved those gods, and held that they loved her. In like way, the Jewish women shamelessly told Jeremiah³, *we will certainly do whatsoever thing goes out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine*.

6. *Therefore, i. e. because she said, I will go after my lovers, behold I will hedge up thy ways*; lit. *behold, I hedging*. It expresses an immediate future, or something which, as being fixed in the mind of God, is as certain as if it were actually taking place. So swift and certain should be her judgments.

Thy way. God had before spoken of Israel; now He turns to her, pronouncing judgment upon her; then again He turneth away from her, as not deigning to regard her. "If the sinner's way were plain, and the soul

¹ See Ezek. xvi. 31-4.

² Pr. xxi. 17.

³ Jer. xlv. 17, 18.

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7 And she shall follow
after her lovers, but she
shall not overtake them;
and she shall seek them,
but shall not find them:

had still temporal prosperity, after it had turned away from its Creator, scarcely or never could it be recalled, nor would it hear the voice behind it, warning it. But when adversity befalls it, and tribulation or temporal difficulties overtake it in its course, then it remembers the Lord its God." So it was with Israel in Egypt. When they sat by the flesh pots, and did eat bread to the full, amid the fish, which they did eat freely, the cucumbers and the melons, they forgot the God of their fathers, and served the idols of Egypt. Then He raised up a new king, who made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick and in all the service of the field; then they groaned by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage, and God heard their groaning¹. So in the book of Judges the ever-recurring history is, they forsook God; He delivered them into the hands of their enemies; they cried unto Him; He sent them a deliverer. A way may be found through a hedge of thorns, although with pain and suffering; through a stone wall even a strong man cannot burst a way. Thorns then may be the pains to the flesh, with which God visits sinful pleasures, so that the soul, if it would break through to them, is held back and torn; the wall may mean, that all such sinful joys shall be cut off altogether, as by bereavement, poverty, sickness, failure of plans, &c. In sorrows, we cannot find our idols, which, although so near, vanish from us; but we may find our God, though we are so far from Him, and He so often seems so far from us. "God hedgeth with thorns the ways of the elect, when they find prickles in the things of time, which they desire. They attain not the pleasures of this world which they crave." They cannot find their paths, when, in the special love of God, they are hindered from obtaining what they seek amiss. "I escaped not Thy scourges," says St. Augustine, as to his heathen state², "for what mortal can? For Thou wert ever with me, mercifully rigorous, and besprinkling with most bitter alloy all my unlawful pleasures, that I might seek pleasure without alloy. But where to find such, I could not discover, save in Thee, O Lord, Who teacheest by sorrow, and woundest us, to heal, and killest us, lest we die from Thee."

7. And she shall follow after. The words

¹ Ex. xvi. 3. Nu. xi. 5. Ex. i. 8, 14. ii. 23, 4.

then shall she say, 'I will
go and return to my^m
first husband; for then
was it better with me than
now.

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ch. 5. 15.
Luke 15. 18.
Ezek. 16. 8.

rendered follow after and seek³, are intensive, and express "eager, vehement pursuit," and "diligent search." They express, together, a pursuit, whose minuteness is not hindered by its vehemence, nor its extent and wideness by its exactness. She shall seek far and wide, minutely and carefully, everywhere and in all things, and shall fail in all. For eighteen hundred years the Jews have chased after a phantom, a Christ, triumphing, after the manner of the kings of the earth, and it has ever escaped them. The sinful soul will too often struggle on, in pursuit of what God is withdrawing, and will not give over, until, through God's persevering mercy, the fruitless pursuit exhausts her, and she finds it hopeless. Oh the wilfulness of man, and the unwearied patience of God!

Then shall she say, I will go and return. She encourages herself tremblingly to return to God. The words express a mixture of purpose and wish. Before, she said, "Come, let me go after my lovers;" now, she says, "Come let me go and let me return," as the prodigal in the Gospel, I will arise and go to my Father.

To my first husband. "God is the first Husband of the soul, which, while yet pure, He, through the love of the Holy Ghost, united with Himself. Him the soul longeth for, when it findeth manifold bitteresses, as thorns, in those delights of time and sense which it coveted. For when the soul begins to be gnawed by the sorrows of the world which she loveth, then she understandeth more fully, how it was better with her, with her former husband. Those whom a perverse will led astray, distress mostly converts." "Mostly, when we cannot obtain in this world what we wish, when we have been wearied with the impossibility of our search of earthly desires, then the thought of God returns to the soul; then, what was before distasteful, becomes pleasant to us; He Whose commands had been bitter to the soul, suddenly in memory grows sweet to her, and the sinful soul determines to be a faithful wife." And God still vouchsafes to be, on her return, the Husband even of the adulterous soul, however far she had strayed from Him.

For then it was better with me than now. It is the voice of the prodigal son in the Gospel, which the Father hears, How many hired servants of my Father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! "I will

² Conf. ii. 4.

³ בקש, רדף.

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8 For she did not ^a know
that ^o I gave her corn, and

^a Isa. 1. 3.
^o Ezek. 16. 17, 18,
19.
[†] Heb. *new wine*
[†] Or, *wherewith*
they made
Baal, ch. 8. 4.

† wine, and oil, and multi-
plied her silver and gold,
|| *which* they prepared for
Baal.

9 Therefore will I re-

turn, and ^p take away my
corn in the time thereof,

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and my wine in the sea-^r ver. 3.
son thereof, and will || re-[†] Or, *take away*.
cover my wool and my flax
given to cover her naked-
ness.

serve," Israel would say, "the living and true God, not the pride of men, or of evil spirits; for even in this life it is much sweeter to bear the yoke of the Lord, than to be the servant of men." In regard to the ten tribes, the "then" must mean the time before the apostasy under Jeroboam. God, in these words, softens the severity of His upbraiding and of His sentences of coming woe, by the sweetness of promised mercy. Israel was so impatient of God's threats, that their kings and princes slew those whom He sent unto them. God wins her attention to His accusations by this brief tempering of sweetness.

8. *For she did not know.* The prophet having, in summary¹, related her fall, her chastisement, and her recovery, begins anew, enlarging both on the impending inflections, and the future mercy. *She did not know*, because she would not; she would not retain God in her knowledge². Knowledge, in Holy Scripture, is not of the understanding, but of the heart and the will.

That I gave her corn, &c. The *I* is emphatic³. *She did not know, that it was I Who gave her.* God gave them the corn, and wine, and oil, first, because He gave them the land itself. They held it of Him as their Lord. As He says⁴, *The land is Mine, and ye are strangers and sojourners with Me.* He gave them also in the course of His ordinary Providence, wherein He also gave them the gold and silver, which they gained by trading. Silver He had so multiplied to her in the days of Solomon, that it was in Jerusalem as stones, nothing accounted of⁵, and gold, through the favor which He gave him⁶, was in abundance above measure.

Which they prepared for Baal. Rather, as in the E. Margin, *which they made into Baal*⁷. "Of that gold and silver, which God had so multiplied, Israel, revolting from the house of David and Solomon, made, first the calves of gold, and then Baal." Of God's own gifts they made their gods. They took God's gifts as from their gods, and made them into gods to them. *Baal*, Lord, the same as *Bel*, was an object of idolatry among the Phœnicians and Tyrians. Its worship was brought into Israel by Jezebel, daughter of a king of

Sidon. Jehu destroyed it for a time, because its adherents were adherents of the house of Ahab. The worship was partly cruel, like that of Moloch, partly abominable. It had this aggravation beyond that of the calves, that Jezebel aimed at the extirpation of the worship of God, setting up a rival temple, with its 450 prophets and 400 of the kindred idolatry of Ashtaroath, and slaying all the prophets of God.

It seems to us strange folly. They attributed to gods, who represented the functions of nature, the power to give what God alone gives. How is it different, when men now say, "nature does this, or that," or speak of "the operations of nature," or the laws of "nature," and ignore God Who appoints those laws, and *worketh hitherto*⁸ "those operations?" They attributed to planets (as have astrologers at all times) influence over the affairs of men, and worshiped a god, Baal-Gad, or Jupiter, who presided over them. Wherein do those otherwise, who displace God's Providence by fortune or fate or destiny, and say "fortune willed," "fortune denied him," "it was his fate, his destiny," and, even when God most signally interposes, shrink from naming Him, as if to speak of God's Providence were something superstitious? What is this, but to ascribe to Baal, under a new name, the works and gifts of God? And more widely yet. Since "men have as many strange gods as they have sins," what do they, who seek pleasure or gain or greatness or praise in forbidden ways or from forbidden sources, than make their pleasure or gain or ambition their god, and offer their time and understanding and ingenuity and intellect, yea, their whole lives and their whole selves, their souls and bodies, all the gifts of God, in sacrifice to the idol which they have made? Nay, since whosoever believes of God otherwise than He has revealed Himself, does, in fact, believe in another god, not in the One True God, what else does all heresy, but form to itself an idol out of God's choicest gift of nature, man's own mind, and worship, not indeed the works of man's own hands, but the creature of his own understanding?

9. *Therefore I will return.* God is, as it

¹ ver. 5-7.

⁴ Lev. xxv. 23.

² Rom. i. 28.

³ יָדָעָה.

⁵ 1 Kgs x. 27, 21.

⁶ 1b. ix. 14. x. 10, 14.

⁷ See viii. 4. Ezek. xvi. 17-19.

⁸ S. John v. 17.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 785.

10 And now ¹will I discover her [†]lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and [†]Heb. *folly*, or none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

¹ Ezek. 16. 37. & sight of her lovers, and [†] Heb. *folly*, or none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

were, absent from men, when He lets them go on in their abuse of His gifts. *His judgments are far above out of their sight.* He returns to them, and His Presence is felt in chastisements, as it might have been in mercies. He is not out of sight or out of mind, then. Others render it, *I will turn*, i. e. *I will do other than before; I will turn from love to displeasure, from pouring out benefits to the infliction of chastisements, from giving abundance of all things to punishing them with the want of all things.*

I will take away My corn in the time thereof. God shews us that His gifts come from Him, either by giving them when we almost despair of them, or taking them away, when they are all but ours. It can seem no chance, when He so doeth. The chastisement is severer also, when the good things, long looked-for, are, at the last, taken out of our very hands, and that, when there is no remedy. If in harvest-time there be dearth, what afterwards! "God taketh away all, that they who knew not the Giver through abundance, might know Him through want."

And will recover My wool. God recovers, and, as it were, delivers the works of His hands from serving the ungodly. While He leaves His creatures in the possession of the wicked, they are holden, as it were, in captivity, being kept back from their proper uses, and made the handmaidens and instruments and tempters to sin. God made His creatures on earth to serve man, that man, on occasion of them, might glorify Him. It is against the order of nature, to use God's gifts to any other end, short of God's glory; much more, to turn God's gifts against Himself, and make them serve to pride or luxury or sensual sin. It is a bondage, as it were, to them. Whence of them also St. Paul saith ¹, *The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly; and, all creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* Penitents have felt this. They have felt that they deserve no more that the sun should shine on them, or the earth sustain them, or the air support them, or wine refresh them, or food nourish them, since all these are the creatures and servants of the God Whom themselves have offended, and they themselves deserve no more to be served by God's servants, since they have rebelled against their common Master, or to use even rightly

¹ Rom. viii. 20, 22.

Before
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11 ¹I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her [†]feast days, her new moons, [†]Amos 8. 10. and her sabbaths, and all [†]1 Kgs 12. 32. [†]Amos 8. 6. her solemn feasts.

what they have abused against the will of their Creator.

My flax, given to cover her nakedness, i. e. which God had given to that end. Shame was it, that, covered with the raiment which God had given her to hide her shame, she did deeds of shame. The white linen garments of her Priests also were symbols of that purity, which the Great High Priest should have and give. Now, withdrawing those gifts, He gave them up to the greatest visible shame, such as insolent conquerors, in leading a people into captivity, often inflicted upon them. Thereby, in act, was figured that loss of the robe of righteousness, heavenly grace, wherewith God beautifies the soul, wherof when it is stripped, it is indeed foul.

10. *Her lewdness.* The word originally means *folly*, and so *foulness*. For sin is the only real folly, as holiness is the only true wisdom. But the folly of sin is veiled amid outward prosperity, and men think themselves, and are thought, wise and honorable and in good repute, and are centres of attraction and leaders of society, so long as they prosper; as it is said, ² *so long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak of thee.* But as soon as God withdraws those outward gifts, the mask drops off, and men, being no longer dazzled, despise the sinner, while they go on to hug the sin. God says, *I will discover*, as just before He had said, that His gifts had been given to cover her. He would then lay her bare outwardly and inwardly; her folly, foulness, wickedness, and her outward shame; and that, *in the sight of her lovers*, i. e. of those whom she had chosen instead of God, her idols, the heavenly bodies, the false gods, and real devils. Satan must jeer at the wretched folly of the souls whom he deceives.

And none shall deliver her out of My hand. Neither rebel spirits nor rebel men. The evil spirits would prolong the prosperity of the wicked, that so they might sin the more deeply, and might not repent, (which they see men to do amid God's chastisements,) and so might incur the deeper damnation.

11. *I will also cause her mirth to cease, her feast days, &c.* Israel had forsaken the temple of God; despised His priests; received from Jeroboam others whom God had not chosen; altered, at least, one of the festivals; celebrated all, where God had forbidden; and

² Ps. xlix. 18.

Before
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12 And I will † destroy
her vines and her fig trees,
whereof she hath said,
These are my rewards that
my lovers have given me:
and * I will make them a
forest, and the beasts of the
field shall eat them.

† Heb. make desolate.
ver. 5.

* Ps. 80. 12, 13.
Isa. 5. 6.

worshiped the Creator under the form of a brute creature¹. Yet they kept the great feast-days, whereby they commemorated His mercies to their forefathers; the new moons, whereby the first of every month was given to God; the sabbaths, whereby they owned God as the Creator of all things; and all the other solemn feasts, whereby they thanked God for acts of His special Providence, or for His annual gifts of nature, and condemned themselves for trusting in false gods for those same gifts, and for associating His creatures with Himself. But man, even while he disobeys God, does not like to part with Him altogether, but would serve Him enough to soothe his own conscience, or as far as he can without parting with his sin which he loves better. Jeroboam retained all of God's worship, which he could combine with his own political ends; and even in Ahab's time Israel halted between two opinions, and Judah swore both by the Lord and by Malcham², the true God and the false. All this their worship was vain, because contrary to the Will of God. Yet since God says, *I will take away all her mirth*, they had, what they supposed to be, religious mirth in their feasts, fulfilling as they thought, the commandment of God, *Thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts*³. She could have no real joy, since true joy is in the Lord⁴. So, in order that she might not deceive herself any more, God says that He will take away that feigned formal service of Himself, which they blended with the real service of idols, and will remove the hollow outward joy, that, through repentance, they might come to the true joy in Him.

12. *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees.* Before, God had threatened to take away the fruits in their seasons; now He says, that He will take away all hope for the future; not the fruit only, but the trees which bare it. "The vine is a symbol of joy, the fig of sweetness⁵." It was the plague, which God in former times laid upon those, out of the midst of whom He took them to be His people. ⁶*He smote their vines also and*

¹ See Introduction, p. 11.

² Deut. xvi. 14.

³ See Jud. ix. 11, 13.

⁴ Zeph. i. 5.

⁵ Phil. iv. 4.

Before
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cir. 785.

13 And I will visit upon
her the days of Baalim,
wherein she burned incense
to them, and she * decked
herself with her earrings
and her jewels, and she
went after her lovers, and
forgot me, saith the LORD.

* Ezek. 23. 40.
42.

their fig trees, and brake the trees of their coasts. Now that they had become like the heathen, He dealt with them as with the heathen.

Of which she said, these are my rewards; lit. my hire. It is the special word, used of the payment to the adulteress, or degraded woman, and so continues the likeness, by which he had set forth the foulness of her desertion of God.

And I will make them a forest. The vines and fig-trees which had aforetime been their wealth, and full of beauty, should, when neglected, run wild, and become the harbour of the wild beasts which should prey upon them. So to the wicked God causes, *that the things which should have been for their wealth should be an occasion of falling*¹. They contain in themselves the sources of their own decay.

13. *I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, or Baals.* When men leave the one true God, they make to themselves many idols. They act, as if they could make up a god piece-meal out of the many attributes of the One God, and create their Creator. His power of production becomes one God; His power of destroying, another; His Providence, a third; and so on, down to the very least acts. So they had many Baals or Lords; a Baal-berith², Lord of covenants, who was to guard the sanctity of oaths; Baal-zebub³, Lord of flies, who was to keep off the plague of flies, and Baal-Peor⁴, who presided over sin. All these their various idolatries, and all the time of their idolatries, God threatens to visit upon them at once. "The days of punishment shall equal the days of the wanderings, in which she burnt incense to Baal." God spares long. But when persevering impenitence draws down His anger, He punishes not for the last sin only, but for all. Even to the penitent, God mostly makes the chastisement bear some proportion to the length and greatness of the sin.

Wherein she burnt incense unto them. Incense was that part of sacrifice, which especially denoted thanksgiving and prayer ascending to God.

And she decked herself with her ear-rings and

⁶ Ps. cv. 33. See Jer. v. 17.

⁷ Ps. lxi. 22.

⁸ 2 Kgs. i. 2.

⁹ Jud. viii. 33.

¹⁰ Num. xxv. 3.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 785.
Ezek. 20. 25. 14 ¶ Therefore, be-
hold, I will allure her,
and bring her into

the wilderness, and speak
|| † comfortably unto
her. Before
CHRIST
cir. 785.
Or, friendly,
Heb. to her
heart.

her jewels. Christ says to the bride¹, *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.* But what He gave her, she threw away upon another, and cast her pearls before swine. She decked herself, i.e. made God's ornaments her own, used them not as He gave them, but artificially as an adulteress. And what else is it, to use wit or beauty or any gift of God, for any end out of God? "The ornament of souls which choose to serve idols, is to fulfill those things which seem good to the unclean spirits.—Very beautiful to devils must be the sin-loving soul, which chooses to think and to do whatsoever is sweet to, and loved by them." Sins of the flesh being a part of the worship of Bual, this garish trickery and pains to attract had an immediate offensiveness, besides its belonging to idols. He still pictures her as seeking, not sought by her lovers. *She went after her lovers, and forgot Me.* The original has great emphasis. *She went after her lovers, and Me she forgot, saith the Lord.* She went after vanities, and God, her All, she forgot. Such is the character of all engrossing passion, such is the course of sin, to which the soul gives way, in avarice, ambition, worldliness, sensual sin, godless science. The soul, at last, does not rebel against God; it forgets Him. It is taken up with other things, with itself, with the objects of its thoughts, the objects of its affections, and it has no time for God, because it has no love for Him. So God complains of Judah by Jeremiah, *their fathers have forgotten My name for Baal*².

14. Therefore. The inference is not what we should have expected. Sin and forgetfulness of God are not the natural causes of, and inducements to mercy. But God deals not with us, as we act one to another. Extreme misery and degradation revolt man; man's miseries invite God's mercies. God therefore has mercy, not because we deserve it, but because we need it. He therefore draws us, because we are so deeply sunken. He prepareth the soul by those harder means, and then the depths of her misery cry to the depths of His compassion, and because chastisement alone would stupify her, not melt her, He changes His wrath into mercy, and speaks to the heart which, for her salvation, He has broken.

I will allure her. The original word is used often readily enticed, as a simple one,

whether to good or ill. God uses, as it were, Satan's weapons against himself. As Satan had enticed the soul to sin, so would God, by holy enticements and persuasiveness, allure her to Himself. God too hath sweetnesss for the penitent soul, far above all the sweetnesss of present earthly joys; much more, above the bitter sweetnesss of sin.

I Myself (such is the emphasis) *will allure her.* God would shew her something of His Beauty, and make her taste of His Love, and give her some such glimpse of the joy of His good-pleasure, as should thrill her and make her, all her life long, follow after what had, as through the clouds, opened upon her.

And will bring her into the wilderness. God, when He brought Israel out of Egypt, led her apart from the pressure of her hard bondage, the sinful self-indulgences of Egypt and the abominations of their idolatries, into the wilderness, and there, away from the evil examples of the nation from which He drew her and of those whom she was to dispossess, He gave her His law, and taught her His worship, and brought her into covenant with Himself³. So in the beginning of the Gospel, Christ allured souls by His goodness in His miracles, and the tenderness of His words, and the sweetness of His preaching and His promises, and the attractiveness of His sufferings, and the mighty manifestations of His Spirit. So is it with each penitent soul. God, by privation or suffering, turns her from her idols, from the turmoil of the world and its distractions, and speaks, Alone to her alone.

And speak to her heart; lit. on her heart, making an impression on it, soothing it, in words which will dwell in it, and rest there. Thus within, not without, *He putteth His laws in the mind, and writeth them in the heart, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.* God speaks to the heart, so as to reach it, soften it, comfort it, tranquilize it, and, at the last, assure it. He shall speak to her, not as in Sinai, amid blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard intrated that the word should not be spoken to them any more⁴, but to the heart. But it is in solitude that He so speaks to the soul and is heard by her, warning, reproof, piercing, penetrating through every fold, until He reaches the very inmost heart and dwells there. And then he infuseth hope of pardon,

¹ Cant. i. 10.

² S. Cyr.

³ Jer. xxiii. 27. add Jud. iii. 7. 1 Sam. xii. 9, 10. Jer. ii. 32. iii. 20. xiii. 25. xviii. 15. Ezek. xxii. 12.

xxiii. 35. Isa. xvii. 10. Ps. lx. 17. i. 22. lxxviii. 11. cvl. 13, 21.

⁴ See Ezek. xx. 34-36.

⁵ Heb. viii. 10. 2 Cor. iii. 3.

⁶ Heb. xii. 18, 19.

Before
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15 And I will give her
vineyards from thence, and
the valley of Achor for a
door of hope: and she shall

* Josh. 7. 26.
Isai. 65. 10.

kindleth love, enlighteneth faith, giveth feelings of child-like trust, lifteth the soul tremblingly to cleave to Him Whose voice she has heard within her. Then His infinite Beauty touches the heart; His Holiness, Truth, Mercy, penetrate the soul; in silence and stillness the soul learns to know itself and God, to repent of its sins, to conquer self, to meditate on God. *Come out' from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you'.*

"Search we the Scriptures, and we shall find, that seldom or never hath God spoken in a multitude; but so often as He would have anything known to man, He shewed Himself, not to nations or people, but to individuals, or to very few, and those severed from the common concourse of men, or in the silence of the night, in fields or solitudes, in mountains or vallies. Thus He spake with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, and all the Prophets. Why is it, God always speaketh in secret, except that He would call us apart? Why speaketh He with a few, except to collect and gather us into one? In this solitude doth God speak to the soul, from the beginning of its conversion to the loneliness of death. Here the soul, which, overspread with darkness, knew neither God nor itself, learns with a pure heart to know God. Here, placed aloft, she sees all earthly things flee away beneath her, yea, herself also passing away in the sweeping tide of all passing things." Here she learns, and so unlearns her sins, sees and hates herself, sees and loves God. Only "the solitude of the body availeth not, unless there be the solitude of the heart." And if God so speak to the penitent, much more to souls, who consecrate themselves wholly, cleave wholly to Him, meditate on Him. By His presence "the soul is renewed, and cleaving, as it were, to Him, feels the sweetness of an inward taste, spiritual understanding, enlightening of faith, increase of hope, feeling of compassion, zeal for righteousness, delight in virtue. She hath in orison familiar converse with God, feeling that she is heard, and mostly answered: speaking face to face with God, and hearing what God speaketh in her, constraining God in prayer and sometimes prevailing."

15. And I will give her her vineyards from thence. God's mercies are not only in word,

ing there, as in *the days
of her youth, and as in
the day when she came up
out of the land of Egypt.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 785.

* Jer. 2. 2.
Ezek. 16. 8, 22,
60.
Ex. 15. 1.

but in deed. He not only speaks to her heart, but He restores to her what He had taken from her. He promises, not only to reverse His sentence, but that He would make the sorrow itself the source of the joy. He says, I will give her back her vineyards thence, i. e. from the wilderness itself; as elsewhere, He says, *The wilderness shall be a fruitful field*.⁴ Desolation shall be the means of her restored inheritance and joy in God. Through fire and drought are the new flagons dried and prepared, into which the new wine of the Gospel is poured.

And the valley of Achor [lit. troubling] for a door of hope. As, at the first taking possession of the promised land, Israel learnt through the transgression and punishment of Achan, to stand in awe of God, and thenceforth all went well with them, when they had wholly freed themselves from the accursed thing, so to them shall "sorrow be turned into joy, and hope dawn there, where there had been despair." "Therefore only had they to endure chastisements, that through them they might attain blessings." It was through the punishment of those who troubled the true Israel, "the destruction of Jerusalem, that to the Apostles and the rest who believed, the hope of victory over the whole world was opened." "Hope." The word more fully means, a "patient, enduring longing." To each returning soul, the valley of trouble, or the lowliness of repentance, becometh a door of patient longing, not in itself, but because God giveth it to be so; a longing which reacheth on, awaiteth on, entering within the veil, and bound fast to the Throne of God. But then only, when none of the accursed thing⁵ cleaveth to it, when it has no reserves with God, and retains nothing for itself, which God hath condemned.

And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth. The song is a responsive song, choir answering choir, each stirring up the other to praise, and praise echoing praise, as Israel did after the deliverance at the Red Sea. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord. I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel, and all the women went out after her. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. So the Seraphim sing one to another, Holy, holy, holy⁶; so

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 17.

² Hugo de S. Vict. de Arc. Noe. iv. 4. in Lap.

³ S. Greg. Mor. xxx. 12. Lap.

⁴ Ric. Vict. in Cant. iii. 4. Lap.

⁵ Isa. xxxii. 15.

⁶ Ex. xv. 1, 20, 1.

⁷ Josh. vii. 11-15.

⁸ Is. vi. 3.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 785.
That is, My
husband.

16 And it shall beat that
day, saith the LORD, that
thou shalt call me || Ishi;

and shalt call me no more
|| Baali.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 785.
That is, My
lord.

17 For I will take

* Ex. 23. 13. Josh. 23. 7. Ps. 16. 4. Zech. 13. 2.

S. Paul exhorts Christians to admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord¹; so the Jewish psalmody passed into the Christian Church, and the blessed in heaven, having on the Cross passed the troublesome sea of this world, sing the new song of Moses and of the Lamb².

She shall sing there. Where? There, where He allureth her, where He leadeth her, where He speaketh to her heart, where He inworketh in her that hope. There, shall she sing, there, give praise and thanks.

As in the days of her youth. Her youth is explained, in what follows, to be the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt, when she was first born to the knowledge of her God, when the past idolatries had been forgiven and cut off, and she had all the freshness of new life, and had not yet wasted it by rebellion and sin. Then God first called Israel, My firstborn son. My son, My firstborn³. She came up into the land which God chose, out of Egypt, since we go up to God and to things above; as, on the other hand, the Prophet says, Woe to those who go down to Egypt⁴, for the aids of this world; and the man who was wounded, the picture of the human race, was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho⁵.

16. And it shall be—thou shalt call Me Ishi [my Husband,] and shalt call Me no more Baali [my Baal, Lord.] Baal, originally Lord, was a title sometimes given to the husband. "The lord of the woman," "her lord," "the heart of her lord," stand for "the husband," "her husband." God says, "so wholly do I hate the name of idols, that on account of the likeness of the word Baal, my Lord, I will not be so called even in a right meaning, lest, while she utter the one, she should think on the other, and calling Me her Husband, think on the idol." Yet, withal, God says that He will put into her mouth the tenderer name of love, Ishi, lit. my Man. In Christ, the returning soul, which would give herself wholly to God, however far she had wandered, should not call God so much her Lord, as her Husband. "Every soul, although laden with sins, meshed in vices, snared by enticements, a captive in exile, imprisoned in the body, sticking fast in the mud, fixed in the mire, affixed to its earthly members, nailed down by cares, distracted by turmoils, narrowed by fears, prostrated by grief, wandering in er-

rors, tossed by anxieties, restless through suspicions, in line, a captive in the land of the enemy, defiled with the dead, accounted with them who go down in the grave⁶,—although she be thus condemned, in state thus desperate, yet she may perceive that in herself, whence she may not only respire to hope of pardon and of mercy, but whence she may dare to aspire to the nuptials of the Word, tremble not to enter into alliance with God, be not abashed to take on her the sweet yoke of love with the Lord of Angels. For what may she not safely dare with Him, with Whose image she seeth herself stamped, and glorious with His likeness? To this end God Himself, the Author of our being, willed that the ensign of our Divine nobleness of birth should ever be maintained in the soul, that she may ever have that in herself from the Word, whereby she may ever be admonished, either to stand with the Word, or to return to Him, if she have been moved. Moved, not as though removing in space, or walking on foot, but moved (as a spiritual substance is moved) with its affections, yea, its defections, it goes away from itself, as it were, to a worse state, making itself unlike itself and degenerate from itself, through gravity of life and morals; which unlikeness, however, is the fault, not the destruction, of nature. Contrariwise, the return of the soul is its conversion to the Word, to be re-formed by Him, conformed to Him. Wherein? In love. For He saith, be ye followers of me, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. Such conformity marries the soul to the Word, when she, having a likeness to Him by nature, also maketh herself like to Him in will, loving as she is loved. Wherefore, if she loveth perfectly, she is married. What sweeter than this conformity? What more desirable than this love? For by it, not content with human guidance, thou approachest, by thyself, O soul, confidentially to the Word; to the Word thou constantly cleavest; of the Word thou familiarly enquirest, and consultest as to all things, as capacious in understanding as emboldened in longing. This is contract of marriage, truly spiritual and holy. Contract! I have said too little. It is embrace. For embrace it is, when to will the same and nill the same, maketh of twain, one spirit."

17. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth. It is, then, of grace. He

¹ Col. iii. 16.

² Ex. iv. 22.

³ Luke x. 30. See above on l. 11.

⁴ Rev. xv. 3.

⁵ Isa. xxxi. 1.

⁶ Ex. xxi. 22. 2 Sam. xi. 26. Prov. xxxi. 11, &c.

⁷ S. Bern. in Cant. Serm. 83. Lap.

⁸ Baruch iii. 10, 11.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 785.

away the names of Baalim
out of her mouth, and
they shall no more be
remembered by their
name.

⁴ Job. 23. 18 And in that day will
Is. 11. 6-9. I make a ⁴covenant for
Ezek. 34. 25.

does not only promise the ceasing of idolatry, but that it shall be the fruit of His converting grace, the gift of Him from Whom *is both to will and to do*. *I will take away, as God saith elsewhere¹, I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall be no more remembered; and, ²the idols He shall utterly abolish.* In like way God foretells of Judah that the fruit of her captivity should be, that her idols should cease, that He would cleanse them from their idols, and renew them by His grace. ³*In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.* And, ⁴*Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions.*

And they shall be no more remembered, or, made mention of. The names of Bael and the idols, through which Israel sinned, are remembered now, only in the history of their sin.

18. And in that day. ⁴⁵ Truly and properly is the time of the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten called the Day, wherein darkness was dispelled in the world, and the mist dispersed, and bright rays shed into the minds of believers, and the Sun of Righteousness shone upon us, pouring in the light of the true knowledge of God, to those who could open wide the eye of the mind.²

And I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, &c. God promises to do away the whole of the former curse. Before, He had said that their vineyards should be laid waste by the beasts of the field; now, He would make an entire and lasting peace with them. He, Whose creatures they are, would renew for them in Christ the peace of Paradise, which was broken through Adam's rebellion against God, and would command none to hurt them. The blessings of God do

them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and ⁴ I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and

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⁴ Ps. 46. 9.
Isa. 2. 4.
Ezek. 39. 9, 10.
Zech. 9. 10.

not correspond only, they go beyond the punishment. The protection is complete. Every kind of evil animal, beast, bird and reptile, is named. So S. Peter saw *all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air*. All were to be slain to their former selves, and pass into the Church. Together the words express, that God would withhold the power of all enemies, visible or invisible; worldly or spiritual. Each also may denote some separate form or character of the enemy. Thus wild beasts picture savageness or bloodthirstiness, the ceasing whereof ⁶ Isaiah prophesies under the same symbols of beasts of prey, as the leopard, lion, wolf, and bear, or of venomous reptiles, as the asp or the basilisk. The fowls of heaven denote stealthy enemies, which, unperceived and unawares, take the word of God out of the heart; *creeping things*, such as entice to degrading, debasing sins, love of money or pleasure or appetite, *whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things⁷*. All shall be subdued to Christ or by Him; as He says, *I give you power over serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy: and Thou shalt go upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the adder shall thou trample under feet⁸*.

I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth. God foretells much more the greatness of what He would do for man, than the little which man receives. The Gospel brings peace within, and, since ⁹ wars and fightings come from evil passions and lusts, it brings peace, as far it prevails, without also; peace, as the borders of the Church¹⁰; peace in the world, as far as it is won to Christ by the Church; peace to the soul of the believer, so far as he loves God and obeys the Gospel.

And will make them to lie down safely, i. e. in confidence. God gives not outward peace only, but fearlessness. Fearless, the Christian lies down during life, at peace with God, his neighbour, and his own conscience; fearless, because perfect love casteth out fear¹¹; and fearless in death also, because resting in Jesus, in everlasting, unfulfilling, unfading peace.

¹ Zech. xlii. 2.
² Ezek. vi. 6.
³ S. Cyr.

⁴ Isa. ii. 18.
⁵ Ib. xxxvi. 25, 26. xxxvii. 23.
⁶ c. x.

⁷ Phil. iii. 19.
⁸ S. James iv. 1.

⁹ S. Luke x. 19. Ps. xcl. 13.
¹⁰ Ps. cxlvii. 14.
¹¹ 1 S. John iv. 18.

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will make them to 'lie down
safely.

* Lev. 26. 5.
Jer. 23. 6.

19 And I will betroth
thee unto me for ever; yea,

I will betroth thee unto
me in righteousness, and in
judgment, and in loving-
kindness, and in mercies.

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19. *And I will betroth her unto Me for ever.* God does not say here, "I will forgive her;" "I will restore her;" "I will receive her back again;" "I will again shew her love and tenderness." Much as these would have been, He says here much more. He so blots out, forgets, abolishes all memory of the past, that He speaks only of the future, of the new betrothal, as if it were the first espousal of a virgin. Hereafter God would make her wholly His, and become wholly her's, by an union nearer and closer than the closest bond of parent and child, that, whereby they are no more twain, but one flesh; and through this oneness, formed by His own indwelling in her, giving her Himself, and taking her into Himself, and so bestowing on her a title to all which is His. And this, for ever. The betrothal and union of grace in this life passeth over into the union of glory, of which it is said¹, *Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.* He, by His Spirit, shall be with His Church unto the end of the world, and so bind her unto Himself that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. The whole Church shall never fail. This betrothal implies and involves a new covenant, as God says², *Behold the days come, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not according to My covenant which I made with their fathers, which My covenant they brake, and which vanisheth away.* To those who had broken His covenant and been unfaithful to Him, it was great tenderness, that He reproached them not with the past; as neither doth He penitents now. But beyond this, in that He speaks of espousing her who was already espoused to Him, God shews that He means something new, and beyond that former espousal. What God here promised, He fulfilled, not as God the Father, but in Christ. What God promised of Himself, He only could perform. God said to the Church, *I will betroth thee unto Me.* He Who became the Bridegroom³ of the Church was Christ Jesus; she became the wife of the Lamb⁴; to Him the Church was espoused, as a chaste Virgin⁵. He then Who fulfilled what God promised that He would Himself fulfill, was Almighty God.

I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, or rather, (which is more tender yet and more merciful,) by, with, righteousness, &c.

¹ Rev. xix. 9.
² S. John xiii. 29.
³ 2 Cor. xi. 2.

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 31, 32.
⁵ Rev. xxi. 9.
⁶ As in 2 Sam. xiii. 14.

These are the marriage-dowry, the bridal gifts, with⁶ which He purchaseth and espouseth the bride unto Himself. Righteousness then and Judgment, loving-kindness and mercies, and faithfulness or truth, are attributes of God, wherewith, as by gifts of espousal, He maketh her His own. *Righteousness is that in God, whereby He is Himself righteous and just; Judgment, that whereby He puts in act what is right against these who do wrong, and so judges Satan; as when the hour of His Passion was at hand, He said, when the Comforter is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged⁷.* *Loving-kindness is that tender affection, wherewith He cherisheth His children, the works of His hands; Mercies, His tender yearnings over us⁸, wherewith He hath compassion on our weakness; Faithfulness, that whereby He keepeth covenant for ever⁹, and loveth His own unto the end¹⁰.* And these qualities, as they are His, whereby He saved us, so doth He impart them to the Church in her measure, and to faithful souls. These are her dowry, her jewels, her treasure, her inheritance. He giveth to her and to each soul, as it can receive it, and in a secondary way, His Righteousness, Judgment, Loving-kindness, Mercies, Faithfulness. His Righteousness, contrary to her former unholiness, He poureth into her, and giveth her, with it, grace and love and all the fruits of the Spirit. By His Judgment, He giveth her a right judgment in all things, as contrary to her former blindness. *Know ye not, says the Apostle¹¹, that we shall judge angels? how much more, things that pertain to this life?* *Loving-kindness is tender love, wherewith we love one another, as Christ loved us¹².* *Mercies are that same love to those who need mercy, whereby we are merciful, as our Father is merciful¹³.* *Faithfulness is that constancy, whereby the elect shall persevere unto the end, as He saith, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life¹⁴.*

The threefold repetition of the word *betroth* is also, doubtless mysterious, alluding chiefly to the Mystery of the All-Holy Trinity, so often and so manifoldly, in Holy Scripture, foreshadowed by this sacred number. To them is the Church betrothed, by the pronouncing of Whose Names each of her members is, in Holy Baptism, espoused as a chaste

⁷ S. John xvi. 8, 11.

⁸ Ps. cxi. 9.

⁹ S. John xiii. 1.

¹⁰ S. John xv. 12.

¹¹ 1 Cor. vi. 3.

¹² S. Luke vi. 36.

¹³ Rev. ii. 10.

¹⁴ See ab. on i. 6.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 3.

¹⁶ S. John xv. 12.

¹⁷ S. Luke vi. 36.

¹⁸ Rev. ii. 10.

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Jer. 31, 33, 34.
John 17. 3.

20 I will even betroth
thee unto me in faithful-
ness: and ⁵thou shalt
know the LORD.

21 And it shall come to

pass in that day, ^aI will
hear, saith the LORD, I
will hear the heavens, and
they shall hear the earth;
22 And the earth shall

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Zech. 8. 12.

virgin unto Christ. At three times especially did our Lord espouse the Church unto Himself. "First in His Incarnation, when He willed to unite His own Deity with our humanity," and "in the Virgin's womb, the nature of the woman, our nature, human nature, was joined to the nature of God," and that *for ever*. "He will be for ever the Word and Flesh, i. e. God and Man." Secondly, in His Passion, when He washed her with His Blood, and bought her for His own by His Death. Thirdly, in the Day of Pentecost, when He poured out the Holy Spirit upon her, whereby He dwelleth in her and she in Him. And He Who thus espoused the Church is God; she whom He espoused, an adulteress, and He united her to Himself, making her a pure virgin without spot or blemish. "Human marriage makes those who were virgins to cease to be so; the Divine espousal makes her who was defiled, a pure virgin." *I have espoused you*, says S. Paul to those whom he had won back from all manner of heathen sins¹, to one *Husband*, that *I may present you a chaste virgin unto Christ*. O the boundless clemency of God! "How can it be possible, that so mighty a King should become a Bridegroom, that the Church should be advanced into a Bride? That alone hath power for this, which is All-powerful; *love, strong as death*². How should it not easily lift her up, which hath already made Him stoop? If He hath not acted as a Spouse, if He hath not loved as a Spouse, been jealous as a Spouse, then hesitate thou to think thyself espoused."

20. *And thou shalt know the Lord.* This knowledge of God follows on God's act of betrothal and of love. *We love God, because God first loved us.* And the true knowledge of God includes the love of God. "To love man, we must know him: to know God, we must love Him." To acknowledge God, is not yet to know Him. They who love not God, will not even acknowledge Him as He is, "Supreme Wisdom and Goodness and Power, the Creator and Preserver; the Author of all which is good, the Governor of the world, Redeemer of man, the most bounteous Rewarder of those who serve Him, the most just Retributor of those who persevere in rebellion against Him." They who will not love God, cannot even know aright of God. But

to know God, is something beyond this. It is to know by experience that God is good; and this God makes known to the soul which He loves, while it meditates on Him, reads of Him, speaks of Him, adores Him, obeys Him. "This knowledge cometh from the revelation of God the Father, and in it is true bliss. Whence, when Peter confessed Him to be the Son of Man and Son of God, He said, *Blessed art thou; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven*." Yea, this knowledge is life eternal, as He said, *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent*.

21, 22. *I will hear the heavens, &c.* As all nature is closed, and would refuse her office to those who rebel against her God, so, when He hath withdrawn His curse and is reconciled to man, all shall combine together for man's good, and, by a kind of harmony, all parts thereof join their ministries for the service of those who are at unity with Him. And, as an image of love, all, from lowest to highest, are bound together, each depending on the ministry of that beyond it, and the highest on God. At each link, the chain might have been broken; but God Who knit their services together, and had before withheld the rain, and made the earth barren, and laid waste the trees, now made each to supply the other, and led the thoughts of men through the course of causes and effects up to Himself, Who ever causes all which comes to pass.

The immediate want of His people, was the corn, wine and oil; these needed the fruitfulness of the earth; the earth, by its parched surface and gaping clefts, seemed to crave the rain from heaven; the rain could not fall without the Will of God. So all are pictured as in a state of expectancy, until God gave the word, and His Will ran through the whole course of secondary causes, and accomplished what man prayed Him for. Such is the picture. But, although God's gifts of nature were gladdening tokens of His restored favor, and now too, under the Gospel, we rightly thank Him for the removal of any of His natural chastisements, and look upon it as an earnest of His favor toward us, the Prophet who had just spoken of the highest things, the union of man with God in Christ, does not here speak only of the

¹ 1. Rup.

² 2 Cor. xi. 2. see Jer. iii. 1, 2.

³ S. Jer.

⁴ S. Bern. de dedic. Eccl. 8. 5. lap.

⁵ Cant. viii. 6.

⁶ S. John xvii. 3.

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¹ ch. 1. 4.

² Jer. 31. 27.
Zech. 10. 9.

³ ch. 1. 6.

hear the corn, and the wine,
and the oil; ¹ and they
shall hear Jezreel.

23 And ² I will sow her
unto me in the earth; ¹ and
will have mercy upon her

that had not obtained
mercy; and I ³ will say to
them which were not my
people, Thou art my peo-
ple; and they shall say,
Thou art my God.

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ch. 1. 10.
Zech. 13. 9.
Rom. 9. 26.
¹ Pet. 2. 10.

lowest. What God gives, by virtue of an espousal for ever, are not gifts in time only. His gifts of nature are, in themselves, pictures of His gifts of grace, and as such the Prophets employ them. So then God promiseth, and this in order, a manifold abundance of all spiritual gifts. Of these, *corn and wine*, as they are the visible parts, so are they often, in the Old Testament, the symbols of His highest gift, the Holy Eucharist; and *oil*, of God's Holy Spirit, through Whom they are sanctified.

God here calls *Israel* by the name of *Jezreel*, repealing, once more in the close of this prophecy, His sentence, conveyed through the names of the three children of the Prophet. The name *Jezreel* combines in one, the memory of the former punishment and the future mercy. God did not altogether do away the temporal part of His sentence. He had said, "I will scatter;" and, although some were brought back with Judah, *Israel* remained scattered in all lands, in Egypt and Greece and Italy, Asia Minor, and the far East and West. But God turned His chastisement into mercy to those who believed in Him. Now He changes the meaning of the word into, *God shall sow*. *Israel*, in its dispersion, when converted to God, became everywhere the preacher of Him Whom they had persecuted; and in Him,—the true Seed Whom God sowed in the earth and It brought forth much fruit,—converted *Israel* also bore, *some a hundred-fold; some sixty; some thirty.*

23. And I will sow her unto Me in the earth. She whom God sows, is the Church, of whom God speaks as *her*, because she is the Mother of the faithful. After the example of her Lord, and by virtue of His Death, every suffering is to increase her. "The blood of Christians was their harvest-seed!" "The Church was not diminished by persecutions, but increased, and the field of the Lord was even clothed with the richer harvest, in that the seeds, which fell singly, arose multiplied!"

In the earth. "He does not say in *their own land*, i.e. Judea, but the *earth*. The whole earth was to be the seed-plot of the Church, where God would sow her to Himself, plant, establish, cause her to increase, and multiply her mightily." As he said ⁴,

Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Of this sowing, Jews were the instruments. Of them according to the flesh, Christ came; of them were the Apostles and Evangelists and all writers of Holy Scripture; of them was the Church first formed, into which the Gentiles were received, being, with them; knit into one in Christ.

I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy. This which was true of *Israel* in its dispersion, was much more true of the Gentiles. These too, the descendants of righteous Noah, God had cast off for the time, that they should be no more His people, when He chose *Israel* out of them, to make known to them His Being, and His Will, and His laws, and, (although in shadow and in mystery,) Christ Who was to come. So God's mercies again overflow His threatenings. He had threatened to *Israel*, that he should be *unpityed*, and no more His people; in reversing His sentence, He embraces in the arms of His mercy all who were not His people, and says of them all, that they should be *My people and beloved*. At one and the same time, was *Israel* to be thus multiplied, and *pity* was to be shewn to those *not pitied*, and those who were *not God's people*, were to become *His people*. At one and the same time were those promises fulfilled in Christ; the one through the other; *Israel* was not multiplied by itself, but through the bringing-in of the Gentiles. Nor was *Israel* alone, or chiefly, brought into a new relation with God. The same words promised the same mercy to both, Jew and Gentile, that all should be *one in Christ*, all one *Jezreel*, one Spouse to Himself, one *Israel* of God, one Beloved; and that all, with one voice of jubilee, should cry unto Him, "my Lord and my God."

And they shall say, Thou art my God, or rather, shall say, my God. There seems to be more affectionateness in the brief answer, which sums up the whole relation of the creature to the Creator in that one word, *Elohai, my God*. The prophet declares, as before, that, when God thus anew called them His people, they by His grace would obey His call, and surrender themselves wholly to

¹ Tertull. Apol. end. p. 105. Oxf. Tr.

² S. Leo. See others quoted lb. p. 105, 6. note a.

³ Pœc. Not כִּי אֲנִי but כִּי אֲנִי.

⁴ Ps. ii. 8.

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CHAPTER III.

1 *By the expiation of an adulteress, 4 is shewed the desolation of Israel before their restoration.*

• ch. 1. 2. **T**HEN said the LORD unto me, * Go yet, love a woman beloved of her ^b friend, yet an adul-

Him. For to say, *my God*, is to own an exclusive relation to God alone. It is to say, my Beginning and my End, my Hope and my Salvation, my Whole and only Good, in Whom Alone I will hope, Whom Alone I will fear, love, worship, trust in, obey and serve, with all my heart, mind, soul and strength; my God and my All.

III. 1. *Go yet, love a woman, beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress.* This woman is the same Gomer, whom the Prophet had before been bidden to take, and whom, (it appears from this verse) had forsaken him, and was living in adultery with another man. The friend¹ is the husband himself, the Prophet. The word *friend* expresses, that the husband of Gomer treated her, not harshly, but mildly and tenderly so that her faithlessness was the more aggravated sin. *Friend* or *neighbour* too is the word chosen by our Lord to express His own love, the love of the good Samaritan, who, not being akin, became neighbour to Him who fell among thieves, and had mercy upon him. Gomer is called a woman, *isha*², not, thy wife, *ishtecca*², in order to describe the state of separation, in which she was living. Yet God bids the Prophet to love her, i. e. shew active love to her, not, as before, to take her; for she was already and still his wife, although unfaithful. He is now bidden to buy her back, with the price and allowance of food, as of a worthless slave, and so to keep her apart, on course food, abstaining from her former sins, but without the privileges of marriage, yet with the hope of being, in the end, restored to be altogether his wife. This prophecy is a sequel to the former, and so relates to Israel, after the coming of Christ, in which the former prophecy ends.

According to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel. The Prophet is directed to frame his life, so as to depict at once the ingratitude of Israel or the sinful soul, and the abiding, persevering, love of God. The woman, whom God commands him to love, he

teress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons [†] of wine.

2 So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an [†] half homer of bar- [†] Heb. *lethech*. ley:

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[†] Heb. of grapes.

had loved before her fall; he was now to love her after her fall, and amid her fall, in order to rescue her from abiding in it. His love was to outlive her's, that he might win her at last to him. Such, God says, is the love of the Lord for Israel. He loved her, before she fell; for the woman was beloved of her friend, and yet an adulteress. He loved her after she fell, and while persevering in her adultery. For God explains His command to the Prophet still to love her, by the words, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, while they look to other gods, lit., and they are looking. The words express a contemporary circumstance. God was loving them and looking upon them; and they, all the while, were looking to other gods.

Love flagons of wine; lit. of grapes, or perhaps, more probably, cakes of grapes, i. e. dried raisins. Cakes were used in idolatry³. The wine would betoken the excess common in idolatry, and the bereavement of understanding: the cakes denote the sweetness and lusciousness, yet still the dryness, of any gratification out of God, which is preferred to Him. Israel despised and rejected the true Vine, Jesus Christ, the source of all the works of grace and righteousness, and loved the dried cakes, the observances of the law, which, apart from Him, were dry and worthless.

2. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver. The fifteen shekels were half the price of a common slave⁴, and so may denote her worthlessness. The homer and half-homer of barley, or forty-five bushels, are nearly the allowance of food for a slave among the Romans, four bushels a month. Barley was the offering of one accused of adultery, and, being the food of animals, betokens that she was like horse and mule which have no understanding. The Jews gave dowries for their wives; but she was the Prophet's wife already. It was then perhaps an allowance, whereby he bought her back from her evil freedom, not to live as his wife, but to be honestly

¹ רצ as in Jer. iii. 20. Cant. v. 16.

² אשה נות אשה.

³ Jer. vii. 18. xlii. 19.

⁴ Ex. xxi. 32.

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3 And I said unto her,
Thou shalt abide for me
many days; thou shalt not
play the harlot, and thou

* Deut. 21. 13.

maintained, until it should be fit, completely to restore her.

3. *Thou shalt abide for me many days*; lit. *thou shalt sit*, solitary and as a widow¹, quiet and sequestered; not going after others, as heretofore, but waiting for him²; and *that*, for an undefined, but long season, until he should come and take her to himself.

And thou shalt not be for another man; lit. *and thou shalt not be to a man*, i.e. not even to thine own man or husband. She was to remain without following sin, yet without restoration to conjugal rights. Her husband would be her guardian; but as yet, no more. *So will I also be for thee or toward thee*. He does not say "to thee," so as to belong to her, but "towards thee;" i.e. he would have regard, respect to her; he would watch over her, be kindly disposed towards her; he, his affections, interests, thoughts, would be directed towards her. The word *towards* expresses regard, yet distance also. Just so would God, in those times, withhold all special tokens of His favor, covenant, Providence; yet would he secretly uphold and maintain them as a people, and withhold them from falling wholly from Him into the gulf of irreligion and infidelity.

4. *For the children of Israel shall abide many days*. The condition described is one in which there should be no civil polity, none of the special Temple-service, nor yet the idolatry, which they had hitherto combined with it or substituted for it. *King and prince* include both higher and lower governors. Judah had *kings* before the Captivity, and a sort of *prince* in her governors after it. Judah remained still a polity, although without the glory of her kings, until she rejected Christ. Israel ceased to have any civil government at all. *Sacrifice* was the centre of worship before Christ. It was that part of their service, which, above all, fore-shadowed His love, His Atonement and Sacrifice, and the reconciliation of God by His Blood, Whose merits it pleaded. *Images*, were, *contrariwise*, the centre of idolatry, the visible form of the beings, whom they worshipped instead of God. The *Ephod* was the holy garment which the High-priest wore, with the names of the twelve tribes and the Urim and Thummim, over his heart, and by which he enquired of God. The *Tetraphim* were idolatrous means of divination. So then, *for many days*, a long, long period, *the children of Israel* should *abide*, in a manner waiting for God, as the

¹ Deut. xxi. 13.

shalt not be for *another* man: so *will* I also be for thee.

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4 For the children of

wife waited for her husband, kept apart under His care, yet not acknowledged by Him; not following after idolatries, yet cut off from the sacrificial worship which He had appointed for forgiveness of sins, through faith in the Sacrifice yet to be offered, cut off also from the appointed means of consulting Him and knowing His Will. Into this state the ten tribes were brought upon their Captivity, and (those only excepted who joined the two tribes or have been converted to the Gospel,) they have ever since remained in it. Into that same condition the two tribes were brought, after that, by *killing the Son*, they had *filled up the measure of their father's* sins; and the second temple, which His Presence had hallowed, was destroyed by the Romans. In that condition they have ever since remained; free from idolatry, and in a state of waiting for God, yet looking in vain for a Messiah, since they had not and would not receive Him Who came unto them; praying to God; yet without sacrifice for sin; not owned by God, yet kept distinct and apart by His Providence, for a future yet to be revealed. "No one of their own nation has been able to gather them together or to become their king." Julian the Apostate attempted in vain to rebuild their temple, God interposing by miracles to hinder the effort which challenged His Omnipotence. David's temporal kingdom has perished and his line is lost, because *Shiloh*, the Peace-maker, is come. The typical Priesthood ceased, in presence of the true *Priest after the order of Melchisedek*. The line of Aaron is forgotten, unknown, and cannot be recovered. So hopelessly are their genealogies confused, that they themselves conceive it to be one of the offices of their Messiah to disentangle them. Sacrifice, the centre of their religion, has ceased and become unlawful. Still their characteristic has been to wait. Their prayer as to the Christ has been, "may He soon be revealed." Eighteen centuries have flowed by. *Their eyes have failed with looking for God's promise*, whence it is not to be found. Nothing has changed this character, in the mass of the people. Oppressed, released, favoured; despised, or aggrandised; in East or West; hating Christians, loving to blaspheme Christ, forced (as they would remain Jews,) to explain away the prophecies which speak of Him, deprived of the sacrifices which, to their forefathers, spoke of Him and His Atonement;—still, as a mass, they blindly wait for Him, the true

² Such is the force of *לֹא יִשָּׁב* Ex. xxiv. 14. Jer. xli. 2.

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Israel shall abide many
days ^a without a king, and
without a prince, and
without a sacrifice, and
without [†] an image, and
without an [°] ephod, and
without [†] teraphim :

^a ch. 10. 3.

[†] Heb. a stand-
ing, or, statue,
or, pillar, Isai.
19. 19.

[°] Exod. 23. 6.

[†] Judg. 17. 5.

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5 Afterward shall the
children of Israel return,
and ^a seek the LORD their
God, and ^b David their
king; and shall fear the
LORD and his goodness in
the ¹ latter days.

^a Jer. 50. 4, 5.

ch. 5. 6.

^b Jer. 30. 9.

Ezek. 34. 23, 24.

& 37. 22, 24.

Isai. 2. 2.

Jer. 30. 24.

Ezek. 38. 8, 10.

Dan. 2. 28.

Mic. 4. 1.

knowledge of Whom, His Offices, His Priest-
hood, and His Kingdom, they have laid aside.
And God has been towards them. He has
preserved them from mingling with idolaters
or Mohammedans. Oppression has not extin-
guished them, favor has not bribed them.
He has kept them from abandoning their
mangled worship, or the Scriptures which
they understand not, and whose true meaning
they believe not; they have fed on the raisin-
bushes of a barren ritual and unspiritual legal-
ism since the Holy Spirit they have grieved
away. Yet they exist still, a monument to us,
of God's abiding wrath on sin, as Lot's wife
was to them, encrusted, stiff, lifeless, only that
we know that *the dead shall hear the voice of the
Son of God, and they that hear shall live.*

True it is, that idolatry was not the imme-
diate cause of the final punishment of the
two, as it was of the ten, tribes. But the
words of the prophecy go beyond the first
and immediate occasion of it. The sin,
which God condemned by Hosea, was aliena-
tion from Himself. He loved them, and they
turned to other gods. The outward idolatry
was but a fruit and a symbol of the inward.
The temptation to idolatry was not simply,
nor chiefly, to have a visible symbol to wor-
ship, but the hope to obtain from the beings
so symbolised, or from their worship, what
God refused or forbade. It was a rejection of
God, choosing His rival. "The adulteress
soul is whoever, forsaking the Creator, lov-
eth the creature." The rejection of our Lord
was moreover the crowning act of apostacy,
which set the seal on all former rejection of
God. And when the sinful soul or nation is
punished at last, God punishes not only the last
act, which draws down the stroke, but all the
former accumulated sins, which culminated
in it. So then they who "despised the
Bridegroom, Who came from heaven to seek
the love of His own in faith, and forsaking
Him, gave themselves over to the Scribes and
Pharisees who *slew Him, that the inheritance,*

¹⁸ John vi. 26.

¹⁹ Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.

²⁰ Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

²¹ Jon. Targ. "This is the King Messiah; whether
he be from among the living, his name is David,
or whether he be from the dead, his name is David."
Jerus. Berachoth in Martini Pug. Flid. f. 277. and
Schöttg. Horæ Hebr. T. ii. ad loc. So also the mysti-
cal books, Zohar, Midrash Shemuel (ap. Schöttg.
ii. p. 22.), and Tanchuma, which has, "God said

²² S. Luke xlii. 24.

²³ Isa. lv. 4.

²⁴ Ps. cx. 1.

i. e. God's people, *might be theirs,*" having the
same principle of sin as the ten tribes, were
included in their sentence.

5. *Afterward shall the children of Israel re-
turn.* Elsewhere it is said more fully, *return
to the Lord.* It expresses more than turning
or even conversion to God. It is not conver-
sion only, but reversion too, a turning back
from the unbelief and sins, for which they
had left God, and a return to Him Whom
they had forsaken.

And shall seek the Lord. This word, *seek*,
expresses in Hebrew, from its intensive form,
a diligent search; as used with regard to
God, it signifies a religious search. It is not
such seeking as our Lord speaks of ¹, *Ye seek
me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye
did eat of the loaves and were filled,* or ², *many shall
seek to enter in and shall not be able,* but that
earnest seeking, to which He has promised,
Seek and ye shall find. Before, she had dili-
gently sought her false gods. Now, in the
end she shall as diligently seek God and His
grace, as she had heretofore sought her idols
and her sins.

And David their King. David himself,
after the flesh, this could not be. For he had
long since been gathered to his fathers; nor
was he to return to this earth. *David* then
must be the *Son of David*, the same, of Whom
God says ³, *I will set up One Shepherd over them,*
and He shall feed them, even My servant David,
*and He shall be their Shepherd, and I the Lord
will be their God, and My servant David a
Prince among them.* The same was to be a
*witness, leader, commander to the people*⁴;
He Who was to be raised up to David⁵, a
righteous Branch, and Who was to be called
*the Lord our Righteousness; David's Lord*⁶ as
well as *David's Son*. Whence the older Jews,
of every school, Talmudic, mystical, Biblical,
grammatical, explained this prophecy, of
Christ. Thus their received paraphrase is:
"*Afterward the children of Israel shall rep-
ent, or turn by repentance, and shall seek*

*to the Israelites; In this world ye fear for your
sins; but in the world to come [i. e. the time of
Christ] when the evil nature shall no longer be, ye
shall be amazed at that good which is reserved for
you, as it is written, 'Afterwards the children of
Israel shall return, &c.'*" It is also one of the
passages, which, they say, a voice from heaven,
Bath col, revealed to them, as relating to the
Messiah, Schöttg. lb. p. 141. See also Ibn Ezra and
Kimchi in Pococke, p. 139.

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CHAPTER IV.

1 *God's judgments against the sins of the people, 6 and of the priests, 12 and against their idolatry. 15 Judah is exhorted to take warning by Israel's calamity.*

the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey Messiah the Son of David, their King."

And shall fear the Lord; lit. shall fear toward the Lord and toward His goodness. It is not then a servile fear, not even, as elsewhere, a fear, which makes them shrink back from His awful Majesty. It is a fear, the most opposed to this; a fear, whereby "they shall flee to Him for help, from all that is to be feared;" a reverent holy awe, which should even impel them to Him; a fear of losing Him, which should make them hasten to Him. "They shall fear, and wonder exceedingly, astonished at the greatness of God's dealing, or of their own joy." Yet they should *hasten tremblingly*, as bearing in memory their past unfaithfulness and ill deserts, and fearing to approach, but for the greater fear of turning away. Nor do they hasten with this reverent awe and awful joy to God only, but to *His Goodness* also. His Goodness draws them, and to it they betake themselves, away from all cause of fear, their sins, themselves, the Evil one. Yet even His Goodness is a source of awe. *His Goodness!* How much it contains. All whereby God is good in Himself, all whereby He is good to us. That whereby He is essentially good, or rather Goodness; that whereby He is good to us, as His creatures, as yet more as His sinful, ungrateful, redeemed creatures, re-born to bear the Image of His Son. So then His Goodness overflows into beneficence, and condescension, and graciousness and mercy and forgiving love, and joy in imparting Himself, and complacency in the creatures which He has formed, and re-formed, redeemed and sanctified for His glory. Well may His creatures *tremble towards* it, with admiring wonder that all this can be made their's!

This was to take place in the *latter days*. These words, which are adopted in the New Testament, where Apostles say, *"in the last days, in these last days"*, mean this, the last dispensation of God, in contrast with all which went before, the times of the Gospel¹. The prophecy has all along been fulfilled during this period to those, whether of the ten or of

HEAR the word of the
LORD, ye children

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of Israel: for the LORD hath a "controversy with" the inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor

I. sa. 1. 18. & 3.
Is. 14.
Jer. 25. 31.
ch. 12. 2.
Mic. 6. 2.

the two tribes, who have been converted to Christ, since God ended their temple-worship. It is fulfilled in every soul from among them, who now is *converted and lives*. There will be a more full fulfilment, of which S. Paul speaks, when the eyes of all Israel shall be opened to the deceivableness of the last Anti-Christ; and Enoch and Elias, the two witnesses⁴, shall have come to prepare our Lord's second Coming, and shall have been slain, and, by God's converting grace, *all Israel shall be saved*⁵.

IV. 1. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel.* The Prophet begins here, in a series of pictures as it were, to exhibit the people of Israel to themselves, that they might know that God did not do without cause all this which He denounced against them. Here, at the outset, He summons, the whole people, their prophets and priests, before the judgment-seat of God, where God would condescend, Himself to implead them, and hear, if they had ought in their defence. The title *children of Israel* is, in itself, an appeal to their gratitude and their conscience, as the title "Christian" among us is an appeal to us, by Him Whose Name we bear. Our Lord says, *"If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham; and S. Paul⁶, let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

For the Lord hath a controversy. God wills, in all His dealings with us His creatures, to prove even to our own consciences, the righteousness of His judgments, so as to leave us without excuse. Now, through His servants, He shews men their unrighteousness and His justice; hereafter our Lord, the righteous Judge, will shew it through the book of men's own consciences.

With the inhabitants of the land. God had given the land to the children of Israel, on account of the wickedness of those whom He drove out before them. He gave it to them *"that they might observe His statutes and keep His laws."* He had promised that His *"Eyes should always be upon it from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year."* This land,

the authority of Moses Ben Nachman, who, on Gen. xlix. 1, gives it as a general rule of all their Doctors." Poc.

⁴ Rev. xi. 3.

⁵ Rom. xi. 26.

⁶ S. John viii. 39.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

² Ps. cv. ult.

³ Deut. xi. 12.

¹ Rup.

² Acts ii. 17. Heb. i. 2.

³ "It is a rule given by Kimchi on Isa. ii. 2. 'Whenever it is said in the latter days, it is meant the days of the Messiah.' The same rule is also on that place given by Abarbanel, and backed by

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knowledge of God in the
land.

Jer. 4. 22. & 5. 2 By swearing, and
lying, and killing, and

the scene of those former judgments, given to them on those conditions, ¹the land which God had given to them as their God, they had filled with iniquity.

Because there is no truth, nor mercy. Truth and mercy are often spoken of, as to Almighty God. Truth takes in all which is right, and to which God has bound Himself; mercy, all beyond, which God does out of His boundless love. When God says of Israel, there is no truth nor mercy, He says that there is absolutely none of those two great qualities, under which He comprises all His own Goodness. There is no truth, none whatever, "no regard for known truth; no conscience, no sincerity, no uprightness; no truth of words; no truth of promises; no truth in witnessing; no making good in deeds what they said in words."

Nor mercy. The word has a wide meaning; it includes all love of one to another, a love issuing in acts. It includes loving-kindness, piety to parents, natural affection, forgiveness, tenderness, beneficence, mercy, goodness. The Prophet, in declaring the absence of this grace, declares the absence of all included under it. Whatever could be comprised under love, whatever feelings are influenced by love, of that there was nothing.

Nor knowledge of God. The union of right knowledge and wrong practice is hideous in itself; and it must be especially offensive to Almighty God, that His creatures should know Whom they offend, how they offend Him, and yet, amid and against their knowledge, choose that which displeases Him. And, on that ground, perhaps, He has so created us, that when our acts are wrong, our knowledge becomes darkened ². The knowledge of God is not merely to know some things of God, as that He is the Creator and Preserver of the world and of ourselves. To know things of God is not to know God Himself. We cannot know God in any respect, unless we are so far made like unto Him. *Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.* ³ Knowledge of God being the gift of the Holy Ghost, he who hath not grace, cannot

¹ See Deut. iv. 1, 40. vi. 21-25. &c.

² Rom. i. 21.

³ 1 S. John ii. 3, 4. iv. 7, 8.

⁴ Rom. i. 21, 18, 28.

⁵ The word rendered swearing, *alah*, is derived from the Name of God, *Eloah*, and signifies, using

stealing, and committing
adultery, they break out,
and †blood toucheth† blood.

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have that knowledge. A certain degree of speculative knowledge of God, a bad man may have, as Balaam had by inspiration, and the Heathen who, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God. But even this knowledge is not retained without love. Those who held the truth in unrighteousness ended (S. Paul says ⁴) by corrupting it. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so God gave them over to a reprobate, or undistinguishing mind, that they could not. Certainly, the speculative and practical knowledge are bound up together, through the oneness of the relation of the soul to God, whether in its thoughts of Him, or its acts towards Him. Wrong practice corrupts belief, as mischief corrupts practice. The Prophet then probably denies that there was any true knowledge of God, of any sort, whether of life or faith or understanding or love. Ignorance of God, then, is a great evil, a source of all other evils.

2. *By swearing, and lying; &c.* lit. *swearing or cursing* ⁵, *and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery!* The words in Hebrew are nouns of action. The Hebrew form is very vivid and solemn. It is far more forcible than if he had said, "They swear, lie, kill, and steal." It expresses that these sins were continual, that nothing else (so to speak) was going on; that it was all one scene of such sins, one course of them, and of nothing besides; as we say more familiarly, "It was all, swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery." It is as if the Prophet, seeing with a sight above nature, a vision from God, saw, as in a picture, what was going on, all around, within and without, and summed up in this brief picture, all which he saw. This it was and nothing but this, which met his eyes, wherever he looked, whatever he heard, *swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery.* The Prophet had before said, that the ten tribes were utterly wanting in all truth, all love, all knowledge of God. But where there are none of these, *there*, in all activity, will be the contrary vices. When the land or the soul is empty of the good, it will be full of the evil. *They break out*, i.e. burst through all bounds, set to restrain them, as a river bursts its banks and overspreads all things or sweeps all before it. *And blood toucheth blood*, lit. *bloods touch bloods* ⁶. The

His name; invoking him, probably in a curse, which the noun *alah* signifies.

⁶ "Bloods" is ever, in Holy Scripture, used of bloodshed. On the history, see Introd. p. 5, and below p. 148.

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3 Therefore^e shall the
land mourn, and ^eevery

• Jer. 4. 28. & 12. one that dwelleth therein
4. Amos 5. 16. & shall languish, with the
8. beasts of the field, and with
• Zeph. 1. 3. the fowls of heaven; yea,

blood was poured so continuously and in such
torrents, that it flowed on, until stream met
stream and formed one wide inundation of
blood.

3. *Therefore shall the land mourn.* Dumb
inanimate nature seems to rejoice and to be
in unison with our sense of joy, when bedewed
and fresh through rain and radiant with light;
and, again, to mourn, when smitten with
drought or blight or disease, or devoured by
the creatures which God employs to lay it
waste for man's sins. Dumb nature is, as it
were, in sympathy with man, cursed in Adam,
smitten amid man's offences, its outward show
responding to man's inward heart, wasted,
parched, desolate, when man himself was
marred and wasted by his sins.

With the beasts of the field, lit. "in the
beasts," &c. God included the fowl and the
cattle and every beast of the field in His cov-
enant with man. So here, in this sentence of
woe, He includes them in the inhabitants of
the land, and orders that, since man would
not serve God, the creatures made to serve
him, should be withdrawn from him. "General
iniquity is punished by general desolation."

Yea, the fishes of the sea also. Inland seas or
lakes are called by this same name, as the
Sea of Tiberias and the Dead Sea. Yet here
the Prophet probably alludes to the history
of man's creation, when God gave him domin-
ion ¹ over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of
the heaven, and over every living thing (chaiah),
in just the inverse order, in which he here
declares that they shall be taken away. There
God gives dominion over all, from lowest to
highest; here God denounces that He will
take away all, down to those which are least
affected by any changes. Yet from time to
time God has, in chastisement, directed that
the shoals of fishes should not come to their
usual haunts. This is well known in the his-
tory of sea-coasts; and conscience has acknow-
ledged the hand of God and seen the ground
of His visitation. Of the fulfillment S.
Jerome writes: "Whoso believeth not that
this befell the people of Israel, let him sur-
vey Illyricum, let him survey the Thracas,
Macedonia, the Pannonias, and the whole
land which stretches from the Propontis and
Bosphorus to the Julian Alps, and he will
experience that, together with man, all

the fishes of the sea also
shall be taken away.

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4 Yet let no man strive,
nor reprove another: for
thy people *are* as ^e they that • Deut. 17. 12.
strive with the priest.

the creatures also fail, which afore were
nourished by the Creator for the service of
man."

4. *Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another,*
lit. "Only man let him not strive, and let not
man reprove." God had taken the contro-
versy with His people into His own hands;
the Lord, He said², hath a controversy (rib)
with the inhabitants of the land. Here He
forbids man to intermeddle; man let him not
strive. (He again uses the same word³.) The
people were obstinate and would not hear;
warning and reproof, being neglected, only
aggravated their guilt: so God bids man to
cease to speak in His Name. He Himself
alone will implead them, Whose pleading
none could evade or contradict. Eulorin-
ately, God, teaches us, amid His judgments,
not to strive or throw the blame on each
other, but each to look to his own sins, not to
the sins of others.

*For thy people are as they that strive with the
priest.* God had made it a part of the office
of the priest, to keep knowledge⁴. He had
bidden, that all hard causes should be taken
to ⁵ the priest who stood to minister there before
the Lord their God; and whose refused the
priest's sentence was to be put to death. The
priest was then to judge in God's Name. As
speaking in His Name, in His stead, with
His authority, taught by Himself, they were
called by that Name, in which they spoke,
Elohim⁶, God, not in regard to themselves
but as representing Him. To strive then with
the priest was the highest contumacy; and
such was their whole life and conduct. It
was the character of the whole kingdom of
Israel. For they had thrown off the author-
ity of the family of Aaron, which God had
appointed. Their political existence was
based upon the rejection of that authority.
The national character influences the indi-
vidual. When the whole polity is formed
on disobedience and revolt, individuals will
not tolerate interference. As they had
rejected the priest, so would and did they
reject the prophets. He says not, they were
priest-strivers, (for they had no lawful priests,
against whom to strive,) but they were like
priest-strivers, persons whose habit it was to
strive with those who spoke in God's Name.
He says in fact, let not man strive with those
who strive with God. The uselessness of

¹ Gen. 1. 28. ² Iv. יריב יריב ³ Mal. ii. 7.

⁴ Deut. xvii. 8-12.

⁵ Ex. xxi. 6. xxii. 8, 9.

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5 Therefore shalt thou
fall 'in the day, and the

*See Jer. 6. 4, 5. prophet also shall fall with
& 15. 8.

† Heb. cut off.

‡ Isai. 5. 13.

† Heb. cut off.

will † destroy thy mother.

6 ¶ * My people are † de-
stroyed for lack of knowl-

such reproof is often repeated. ¹ *He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame, and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee.* ² *Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.* S. Stephen gives it as a characteristic of the Jews³, *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.*

5. *Therefore shalt thou fall.* The two parts of the verse fill up each other. "By day and by night shall they fall, people and prophets together." Their calamities should come upon them successively, day and night. They should stumble by day, when there is least fear of stumbling⁴; and night should not by its darkness protect them. Evil should come at noon-day⁵ upon them, seeing it, but unable to repel it; as Isaiah speaks of it as an aggravation of trouble⁶, *thy land strangers devour it in thy presence*; and the false prophets, who saw their visions in the night, should themselves be overwhelmed in the darkness, blinded by moral, perishing in actual, darkness.

And I will destroy thy mother. Individuals are spoken of as the children; the whole nation, as the mother. He denounces then the destruction of all, collectively and individually. They were to be cut off, root and branch. They were to lose their collective existence as a nation; and, lest private persons should flatter themselves with hope of escape, it is said to them, as if one by one, "thou shalt fall."

6. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* "My people are," not, "is." This accurately represents the Hebrew⁷. The word "people" speaks of them as a whole; are, relates to the individuals of whom that whole is composed. Together, the words express the utter destruction of the whole, one and all. They are destroyed *for lack of knowledge*, lit. "of the knowledge," i.e. the only knowledge, which in the creature is real knowledge, that knowledge, of the want of which he had before complained, the knowledge of the Creator. So Isaiah mourns in

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edge: because thou hast re-
jected knowledge, I will

also reject thee, that thou
shalt be no priest to me:
seeing thou hast forgotten
the law of thy God, I will
also forget thy children.

the same words⁸, *therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge.* They are destroyed for lack of it; for the true knowledge of God is the life of the soul, true life, eternal life, as our Saviour saith, *This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou has sent.* The source of this lack of knowledge, so fatal to the people, was the wilful rejection of that knowledge by the priest;

Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me. God marks the relation between the sin and the punishment, by retorting on them, as it were, their own acts; and that with great emphasis, *I will utterly reject thee*⁹. Those, thus addressed, must have been true priests, scattered up and down in Israel, who, in an irregular way, offered sacrifices for them, and connived at their sins. For God's sentence on them is, *thou shalt be no priest to Me.* But the priests whom Jeroboam consecrated out of other tribes than Levi, were priests not to God, but to the calves. Those then, originally true priests to God, had probably a precarious livelihood, when the true worship of God was deformed by the mixture of the calf-worship, and the people *halted between two opinions*; and so were tempted by poverty also, to withhold from the people unpalatable truth. They shared, then, in the rejection of God's truth which they dissembled, and made themselves partakers in its suppression. And now, they *despised, were disgusted with*¹⁰ the knowledge of God, as all do in fact despise and dislike it, who prefer ought besides to it. So God repaid their contempt to them, and took away the office, which, by their sinful connivances, they had hoped to retain.

Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God. This seems to have been the sin of the people. For the same persons could not, at least in the same stage of sin, despise and forget. They who despise or reject, must have before their mind that which they reject. To reject is wilful, conscious, deliberate sin, with a high hand; to forget, an act of negligence.

¹ Prov. ix. 7, 8. ² Ib. xxiii. 9. ³ Acts vii. 51.

⁴ S. John xi. 9, 10. ⁵ Jer. xv. 8. ⁶ Is. i. 7.

⁷ The singular noun, as being a collective, is joined with the plural verb.

⁸ מכלל דעת vi. 13. The absence of the article makes no difference.

⁹ Such is probably the force of the unusual form מְרַחֵם. ¹⁰ Such is the first meaning of the word.

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7 ^aAs they were increased,
so they sinned against me:
^btherefore will I change
their glory into shame.

^a ch. 13. 6.
^b 1 Sam. 2. 30.
Mal. 2. 8.
Phil. 3. 19.

The rejection of God's law was the act of the understanding and will; forgetfulness of it comes from the neglect to look into it; and this, from the distaste of the natural mind for spiritual things, from being absorbed in things of this world, from inattention to the duties prescribed by it, or shrinking from seeing that condemned, which is agreeable to the flesh. The priests knew God's law and despised it; the people forgot it. In an advanced stage of sin, however, man may come to forget what he once despised; and this is the condition of the hardened sinner.

I will also forget thy children, lit. I will forget thy children, I too. God would mark the more, that His act followed on their's; they, first; then, He saith, *I too*. He would requite them, and do what it belonged not to His Goodness to do first. Parents who are careless as to themselves, as to their own lives, even as to their own shame, still long that their children should not be as themselves. God tries to touch their hearts, where they are least steeled against Him. He says not, *I will forget thee*, but *I will forget those nearest thy heart, thy children*. God is said to forget, when He acts, as if His creatures were no longer in His mind, no more the objects of His Providence and love.

7. As they were increased, so they sinned against Me. The increase may be, either in actual number or in wealth, power or dignity. The text includes both. In both kinds of increase, the bad abuse God's gifts against Himself, and take occasion of them to offend Him. The more they were increased in number, the more there were to sin, the more they were who sinned. God promised to make Abraham's seed, as the stars of heaven. They were to shine in the world through the light of the law, and the glory which God gave them while obeying Him. ¹ *Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the Lord thy God hath made thee like the stars of heaven for multitude. Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep His charge, and His statutes, and his judgments, and His commandments always.* God multiplied them, that there might be the more to adore Him. But instead of multiplying subjects, He multiplied apostates. "As many men as Israel had, so many altars did it build to demons, in the sacrifices to whom it sinned against Me." "The more sons God gave to Israel, the more enemies He made to H'mself; for Israel

¹ Deut. x. 22. x. 1.

8 They eat up the sin of
my people, and they † set
their heart on their ini-
quity.

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† Heb. *lift up*
their soul to
their iniquity.

brought them up in hatred to God, and in the love and worship of idols." "As too among the devout, one provokes another, by word and deed, to good works, so, in the congregation of evil doers, one incites another to sins." Again, worldlings make all God's gifts minister to pride, and so to all the sins, which are the daughters of pride. ² *Jeshurun, God says, waxed fat and kicked; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.* In this way too, the increase of wealth which God gives to those who forget Him, increases the occasions of ingratitude and sins.

I will turn their glory into shame. Such is the course of sin and chastisement. God bestows on man, gifts, which may be to him matter of praise and glory, if only ordered aright to their highest and only true end, the glory of God; man perverts them to vain-glory and thereby to sin; God turns the gifts, so abused, to shame. He not only gives them shame instead of their glory; He makes the glory itself the means and occasion of their shame. Beauty becomes the occasion of degradation; pride is proverbially near a fall; "vaulting ambition overleaps itself, and falls on th'other side;" riches and abundance of population tempt nations to wars, which become their destruction, or they invite other and stronger nations to prey upon them. *Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, was the message of Jehoshaphat to Amaziah, and thine heart hath lifted thee up; glory of this, and tarry at home; for why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldst fall, even thou and Judah with thee? But Amaziah would not hear.* He lost his own wealth, wasted the treasures in God's house; and the walls of Jerusalem were broken down.

8. They eat up the sin of My people. The priests made a gain of the sins of the people, lived upon them and by them, conniving at or upholding the idolatries of the people, partaking in their idol-sacrifices and idolatrous rites, which, as involving the desertion of God, were the sin of the people, and the root of all their other sins. This the priests did knowingly. True or false, apostate or irregularly appointed, they knew that there was no truth in the golden calves; but they withheld the truth, they held it down in unrighteousness, and preached Jeroboam's falsehood, *these be thy gods, O Israel*. The reputation, station, maintenance of the false priests depended upon it. Not being of the line of

¹ 1b. xxxii. 15.

² 2 Kings xiv. 10, 11.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 780.

9 And there shall be,
like people, like priest:

Isa. 24. 2.
Jer. 5. 31.
† Heb. visit upon
† Heb. cause to
return.
Lev. 26. 26.
Mic. 6. 14.
Hag. 1. 6.

and I will † punish them
for their ways, and † re-
ward them their doings.

10 For † they shall eat,

Aaron, they could be no priests except to the calves, and so they upheld the sin whereby they lived, and, that they might themselves be accounted priests of God, taught them to worship the calves, as representatives of God.

The word, *sin*, may include indirectly the sin-offerings of the people, as if they loved the sin or encouraged it, in order that they might partake of the outward expiations for it.

And they set their heart on their iniquity, as the source of temporal profit to themselves. "Benefited by the people, they reproved them not in their sinful doings, but charged themselves with their souls, saying, on us be the judgment, as those who said to Pilate, *His blood be upon us*." That which was, above all, *their iniquity*, the source of all the rest, was their departure from God and from His ordained worship. On this they set their hearts; in this they kept them secure by their lies; they feared any misgivings, which might rend the people from them, and restore them to the true worship of God. But what else is it, to extenuate or flatter sin now, to dissemble it, not to see it, not openly to denounce it, lest we lose our popularity, or alienate those who commit it? What else is it to speak smooth words to the great and wealthy, not to warn them, even in general terms, of the danger of making Mammon their god; of the peril of riches, of parade, of luxury, of immoral dressing, and, amid boundless extravagance, neglect of the poor; encouraging the rich, not only in the neglect of Lazarus, but in pampering the dogs, while they neglect him? What is the praise of some petty dole to the poor, but connivance at the withholding from God His due in them? "We see now," says an old writer, "how many prelates live on the oblations and revenues of the laity, and yet, whereas they are bound, by words, by prayers, by exemplary life, to turn them away from sin, and to lead them to amendment, they, in various ways, scandalize, corrupt, infect them, by ungodly conversation, flattery, connivance, co-operation, and neglect of due pastoral care. Whence Jeremiah says, *My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray*. O how horrible and exceeding great will be their damnation, who shall be tormented for each

¹ Dionys. Carth.

² 1. 6.

and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.

Before
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of those under their care, who perish through their negligence."

9. *And there shall be like people, like priest.* Priest and people were alike in sin. Yea they are wont, if bad, to foment each other's sin. The bad priest copies the sins which he should reprove, and excuses himself by the frailty of our common nature. The people, acutely enough, detect the worldliness or self-indulgence of the priest, and shelter themselves under his example. Their defence stands good before men; but what before God? Alike in sin, priest and people should be alike in punishment. "Neither secular greatness should exempt the laity, nor the dignity of his order, the priest." Both shall be swept away in one common heap, in one disgrace, into one damnation. *They shall bind them in bundles to burn them.*

And I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings; lit. I will visit upon him his ways, and his doings I will make to return to him. People and priests are spoken of as one man. None should escape. The judgment comes down upon them, overwhelming them. Man's deeds are called his ways, because the soul holds on the tenor of its life along them, and those ways lead him on to his last end, heaven or hell. The word rendered *doings*² signifies *great doings*, when used of God; *bold doings*, on the part of man. Those bold presumptuous doings against the law and Will of God, God will bring back to the sinner's bosom.

10. *For they shall eat, and not have enough.* This is almost a proverbial saying of Holy Scripture, and, as such, has manifold applications. In the way of nature, it comes true in those, who, under God's afflictive Hand in famine or siege, eat what they have, but have not enough, and perish with hunger. It comes true in those, who, through bodily disease, are not nourished by their food. Yet not less true is it of those who, through their own insatiate desires, are never satisfied, but crave the more greedily, the more they have. Their sin of covetousness becomes their torment.

They shall commit whoredom and not increase; lit. they have committed whoredom. The time spoken of is perhaps changed, because God would not speak of their future sin, as certain. There is naturally too a long interval between this sin and its possible fruit,

מעליהן.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 780. 11 Whoredom and wine
and new wine¹ take away
the heart.
- Isai. 28. 7. 12 ¶ My people ask
See Eccles. 7.
7.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 780. and their staff declareth
unto them : for² the spirit³
of whoredoms hath caused
- Jer. 2. 27.
Hab. 2. 19.
- Isai. 44. 20.
ch. 5. 4.

which may be marked by this change of time. The sin was past, the effect was to be seen hereafter. They used all means, lawful and unlawful, to increase their offspring, but they failed, even because they used forbidden means. God's curse rested upon those means. Single marriage, according to God's law, *they twain shall be one flesh*, yields in a nation larger increase than polygamy. Illicit intercourse God turns to decay. His curse is upon it.

Because they have left off to take heed to the Lord, lit. to watch, observe, the Lord. The eye of the soul should be upon God, watching and waiting to know all indications of His Will, all guidings of His Eye. So the Psalmist says¹, *As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us*. The Angels of God, great and glorious as they are, do *always behold the Face of the Father*², at once filled with His love, and wrapt in contemplation, and reading therein His Will, to do it. The lawless and hopeless ways of Israel sprang from their neglecting to watch and observe God. For as soon as man ceases to watch God, he falls, of himself, into sin. The eye which is not fixed on God, is soon astray amid the vanities and pomps and lusts of the world. So it follows;

11. *Whoredom and wine and new wine take away* (lit. takes away) *the heart*. Wine and fleshly sin are pictured as blended in one, to deprive man of his affections and reason and understanding, and to leave him brutish and irrational. In all the relations of life toward God and man, reason and will are guided by the affections. And so, in God's language, the "heart" stands for the "understanding" as well as the "affections," because it directs the understanding, and the understanding, bereft of true affections, and under the rule of passion, becomes senseless. Besides the perversion of the understanding, each of these sins blunts and dulls the fineness of the intellect; much more, both combined. The stupid sottishness of the confirmed voluptuary is a whole, of which each act of sensual sin worked its part. The Heathen saw this clearly, although, without the grace of God, they did not act on what they saw to be true and right. This, the sottishness of Israel,

destroying their understanding, was the ground of their next folly, that they ascribed to *their stock* the office of God. "Corruption of manners and superstition" (it has often been observed) "go hand in hand."

12. *My people ask counsel at* [lit. on] *their stocks*. They ask habitually⁴; and that, in dependence on *their stocks*. The word *wood* is used of the idol made of it, to bring before them the senselessness of their doings, in that they asked counsel of the senseless wood. Thus Jeremiah⁵ reproaches them for *saying to a stock, my father*; and Habakkuk⁶, *Woe unto him that saith to the wood, awake*.

And their staff declareth unto them. Many sorts of this superstition existed among the Arabs and Chaldees. They were different ways of drawing lots, without any dependence upon the true God to direct it. This was a part of their senselessness, of which the Prophet had just said, that their sins took away their hearts. The tenderness of the word, *My people*, aggravates both the stupidity and the ingratitude of Israel. They whom the Living God owned as His own people, they who might have asked of Him, asked of a stock or a staff.

For the spirit of whoredoms. It has been thought of old, that the evil spirits assault mankind in a sort of order and method, different spirits bending all their energies to tempt him to different sins⁷. And this has been founded on the words of Holy Scripture, "a lying spirit," "an unclean spirit," "a spirit of jealousy," and our Lord said of the evil spirit whom the disciples could not cast out⁸; *This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*. Hence it has been thought that "some spirits take delight in uncleanness and defilement of sins; others urge on to blasphemies; others, to anger and fury; others take delight in gloom; others are soothed with vainglory and pride; and that each instills into man's heart that vice in which he takes pleasure himself; yet that all do not urge their own perversenesses at once, but in turn, as opportunity of time or place, or man's own susceptibility, invites them." Or the word, *spirit of whoredoms*, may mean the vehemence with which men were whirled along by their evil passions, whether by their passionate love of idolatry, or by the fleshly sin which was so often bound up with their idolatry.

They have gone a whoring from under their

¹ Ps. cxviii. 2.

² S. Matt. xviii. 10.

³ The Hebrew tense expresses action which is repeatedly resumed.

⁴ ii. 27.

⁵ Cassian Collat. vii. 17.

⁶ S. Matt. xvii. 21.

⁷ ii. 19.

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them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

Isa. 1. 29. & 57.
6, 7.
Ezek. 6. 13. &
20. 28.

13 ¹ They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good :

God. The words from under continue the image of the adulteress wife, by which God had pictured the faithlessness of His people. The wife was spoken of as *under her husband*¹, i. e. under his authority ; she withdrew herself from under him, when she withdrew herself from his authority, and gave herself to another. So Israel, being wedded to God, estranged herself from Him, withdrew herself from His obedience, cast off all reverence to Him, and prostituted herself to her idols.

13. *They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains.* The tops of hills or mountains seemed nearer heaven, the air was purer, the place more removed from the world. To worship the Unseen God upon them, was then the suggestion of natural feeling and of simple devotion. God Himself directed the typical sacrifice of Isaac to take place on a mountain ; on that same mountain He commanded that the temple should be built ; on a mountain, God gave the law ; on a mountain was our Saviour transfigured ; on a mountain was He crucified ; from a mountain He ascended into heaven. Mountains and hills have accordingly often been chosen for Christian churches and monasteries. But the same natural feeling, misdirected, made them the places of heathen idolatry and heathen sins. The Heathen probably also chose for their star and planet-worship, mountains or large plains, as being the places whence the heavenly bodies might be seen most widely. Being thus connected with idolatry and sin, God strictly forbade the worship on the high places, and (as is the case with so many of God's commandments) man practised it as diligently as if He had commanded it. God had said², *Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations, which ye shall possess, served their gods upon the high mountains, and upon the hills and under every green tree.* But³ *they set them up images and groves [rather images of Ashtaroth] in every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them.* The words express, that this which God forbade they did dili-

¹ Num. v. 19, 29. Ezek. xxiii. 5.

² Deut. xii. 2.

³ 2 Kings xvii. 10, 11.

² therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

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14 || I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery : for them-

Amos 7. 17.
Rom. 1. 28.

Or, *Shall I not,*
&c.

gently ; *they sacrificed much and diligently ; they burned incense much and diligently*⁴ ; and that, not here and there, but generally, on the tops of the mountains, and, as it were, in the open face of heaven. So also Ezekiel complains⁵, *They saw every high hill and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering ; there also they made their sweet savor, and poured out there their drink-offerings.*

Under oaks, [while] poplars and elms [probably the terebinth or turpentine tree] because the shadow thereof is good. The darkness of the shadow suited alike the cruel and the profligate deeds which were done in honor of their false gods. In the open face of day, and in secret they carried on their sin.

Therefore their daughters shall commit whoredoms, and their spouses [or more probably, daughters-in-law] shall commit adultery, or (in the present) commit adultery. The fathers and husbands gave themselves to the abominable rites of Baal-peor and Ashtaroth, and so the daughters and daughters-in-law followed their example. This was by the permission of God, Who, since they glorified *themselves* as they ought, gave them up, abandoned them, to vile affections. So, through their own disgrace and bitter griefs, in the persons of those whose honor they most cherished, they should learn how ill they themselves had done, in departing from Him Who is the Father and Husband of every soul. The sins of the fathers descend very often to the children, both in the way of nature, that the children inherit strong temptations to their parents' sin, and by way of example, that they greedily imitate, often exaggerate, them. Wouldest thou not have children, which thou wouldest wish unborn, reform thyself. The saying may include too sufferings at the hands of the enemy. "What thou dost willingly, that shall your daughters and your daughters-in-law suffer against thine and their will."

14. *I will not punish your daughters.* God threatens, as the severest woe, that He will not punish their sins with the correction of a Father in this present life, but will leave

⁴ *yezabbechu*, not *izbechu* ; *yekatteru*, not *yaktiru*.

⁵ xx. 28.

Before
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* ver. 1, 6.

| Or, be punished.

selves are separated with
whores, and they sacrifice
with harlots: therefore the
people that doth not under-
stand shall || fall.

15 ¶ Though thou, Is-

rael, play the harlot, yet let
not Judah offend; * and
come not ye unto Gilgal,
neither go ye up to ' Beth-
aven, nor swear, The
LORD liveth.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 780.

* ch. 9. 15. & 12.
11.
Amos 4. 4. & 5.
5.
1 Kings 12. 29.
ch. 10. 5.
Amos 8. 14.
Zeph. 1. 5.

the sinners, unheeded, to follow all iniquity. It is the last punishment of persevering sinners, that God leaves them to prosper in their sins and in those things which help them to sin. Hence we are taught to pray¹, *O Lord, correct me, but in judgment, not in Thine anger.* For since God chastiseth those whom He loveth, it follows², *if we be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards, and not sons.* To be chastened severely for lesser sins, is a token of great love of God toward us; to sin on without punishment is a token of God's extremest displeasure, and a sign of reprobation. ³ "Great is the offence, if, when thou hast sinned, thou art undeserving of the wrath of God."

For themselves are separated with whores. God turns from them as unworthy to be spoken to any more, and speaks of them, *They separate themselves, from Whom? and with whom? They separate themselves from God, and with the degraded ones and with devils.* Yet so do all those who choose wilful sin.

And they sacrifice [continually, as before] with [the] harlots. The unhappy women here spoken of were such as were ⁴ *consecrated* (as their name imports) to their vile gods and goddesses, and to prostitution. This dreadful consecration, yea desecration, whereby they were taught to seek honor in their disgrace, was spread in different forms over Phœnicia, Syria, Phrygia, Assyria, Babylonia. Ashtaroth, (the Greek Astarte) was its chief object. This horrible worship prevailed in Midian, when Israel was entering the promised land, and it suggested the devilish device of Balaam⁵ to entangle Israel in sin whereby they might forfeit the favor of God. The like is said to subsist to this day in heathen India. The sin was both the cause and effect of the superstition. Man's corrupt heart gave rise to the worship: and the worship in turn fostered the corruption. He first sanctioned the sin by aid of a degrading worship of nature, and then committed it under plea of that worship. He made his sin a law to him. Women, who never relapsed into the sin, sinned in obedience to the dreadful law⁶. Blinded as they were, individual heathen had the excuse of their hereditary blindness; the

Jews had imperfect grace. The sins of Christians are self-sought, against light and grace.

Therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall. The word comprises both, *that doth not understand, and, that will not understand.* They might have understood, if they would. God had revealed Himself to them, and had given to them His law, and was still sending to them His prophets, so that they could not but have known and understood God's Will, had they willed. Ignorance, which we might avoid or cure, if we would, is itself a sin. It cannot excuse sin. They shall, he says, *fall, or be cast headlong.* Those who blind their eyes, so as not to see or understand God's Will, bring themselves to sudden ruin, which they hide from themselves, until they fall headlong in it.

15. *Let not Judah offend.* The sentence of Israel had been pronounced; she had been declared incorrigible. The Prophet turns from her now to Judah. Israel had abandoned God's worship, rejected or corrupted His priests, given herself to the worship of the calves; no marvel what further excess of riot she run into! But Judah, who had the law and the temple and the service of God, let not her, (he would say,) involve herself in Israel's sin. If Israel, in wilful blindness, had plunged herself in ruin, let not Judah involve herself in her sin and her ruin. He turns (as elsewhere) incidentally to Judah.

Come ye not unto Gilgal. Gilgal lay between Jericho and the Jordan. There, ten furlongs from the Jordan, first in all the promised land, the people encamped; there Joshua placed the monument of the miraculous passage of the Jordan; there he renewed the circumcision of the people which had been intermitted in the wilderness, and the feast of the passover; thither the people returned, after all the victories by which God gave them possession of the land of promise⁷. There Samuel habitually sacrificed, and there, *before the Lord*, i. e. in His special covenanted Presence, he publicly made Saul king⁸. It was part of the policy of Jeroboam to take hold of all these associations, as a sort of set-off against Jerusalem and the Temple, from which he had separated his people. In op-

¹ Jer. x. 24.

² 8. Jer.

³ Num. xxv. xxxi. 8, 16.

⁴ Herod. l. 199. It may have been in some such

⁵ Heb. xii. 8.

הקדשות

way, that Gomer, whom the prophet was bidden to marry, had fallen.

⁷ Josh. iv. 19, 20. v. 9, 10. ix. 6. x. 6-9. xiv. 6.

⁸ 1 Sam. x. 8. xl. 14, 15. xiii. 4-9. xv. 21, 33.

Before
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16 For Israel slideth
back as a backsliding heifer:

* Jer. 3. 6. & 7. 24. er: now the LORD will feed
* 8. 5. them as a lamb in a large
Zech. 7. 11. place.

position to this idolatry, Elisha for a time, established there one of the schools of the Prophets¹.

Neither go ye up to Bethaven. Bethaven, lit. house of vanity, was a city East of Bethel, the house of God. But since Jeroboam had set up the worship of the calves at Bethel, Bethel had ceased to be the house of God, and had become a house or temple of vanity; and so the Prophet gave it no more its own name which was associated with the history of the faith of the Patriarchs, but called it what it had become. In Bethel God had twice appeared to Jacob, when he left the land of promise² to go to Laban, and when he returned³. Thither also the ark of God was for a time in the days of the judges removed from Shiloh⁴, near to which on the south⁵ Bethel lay. It too Jeroboam profaned by setting up the calf there. To these places then, as being now places of the idolatry of Israel, Judah is forbidden to go, and then to swear, the Lord liveth. For to swear by the Lord in a place of idolatry would be to associate the living God with idols⁶, which God expressly forbade.

16. For Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer. The calves which Israel worshiped were pictures of itself. They represented natural, untamed, strength, which, when put to service, started back and shrank from the yoke. "Untractable, petulant, unruly, wanton, it withdrew from the yoke, when it could; if it could not, it drew aside or backward, instead of forward." So is it rare, exceeding rare, for man to walk straight on in God's ways; he jerks, writhes, twists, darts aside hither and thither, hating nothing so much as one straight, even, narrow tenor of his ways.

Now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place. The punishment of Israel was close at hand, now. It would not have the straitness of God's commandments; it should have the wideness of a desert. God would withdraw His protecting Providence from them: He would rule them, although unfelt in His mercy. At large, they wished to be; at large they should be; but it should be the largeness of a wilderness where is no way. There, like a lamb, they should go astray, wandering up and down, unprotected, a prey to wild beasts. Woe is it to that man, whom,

Before
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cir. 780.

17 Ephraim is joined to
idols: let him alone.

18 Their drink is sour,† Matt. 15. 14.
† Heb. is gone.
sour: they have committed whoredom continually:

when he withdraws from Christ's easy yoke, God permits to take unhindered the broad road which leadeth to destruction. To Israel, this wide place was the wide realms of the Medes, where they were withdrawn from God's worship and deprived of His protection.

17. Ephraim is joined to idols, i. e. banded, bound up with them, associated, as the word means, with them so as to cleave to them, willing neither to part with, nor to be parted from, them. The idols are called by a name, denoting toils; with toil they were fashioned, and, when fashioned, they were a toil and grief.

Let him alone, lit. give him rest, i. e. from all further expostulations, which he will not hear. It is an abandonment of Israel for the time, as in the prophet Ezekiel⁸, As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, go ye, serve ye every one his idols. Sinners often long not to be tormented by conscience or by God's warnings. To be left so, is to be abandoned by God, as one whose case is desperate. God will not, while there is hope, leave a man to sleep in sin; for so the numbness of the soul increases, until, like those who fall asleep amid extreme cold of the body, it never awakes.

18. Their drink is sour, lit. turned, as we say of milk. So Isaiah says⁹, Thy silver is become dross; thy wine is mingled, i. e. adulterated, with water; and our lord speaks of salt which had lost its savor. The wine or the salt, when once turned or become insipid, is spoiled, irrecoverably, as we speak of "dead wine." They had lost all their life, and taste of goodness.

Her rulers with shame do love, give ye. Avarice and luxury are continually banded together according to the saying, "covetous of another's, prodigal of his own." Yet it were perhaps more correct to render, her rulers do love, do love, shame¹⁰. They love that which brings shame, which is bound up with shame, and ends in it; and so the Prophet says that they love the shame itself. They act, as if they were in love with the shame, which, all their lives long, they are unceasingly and, as it were, by system, drawing upon themselves. They chase diligently after all the occasions of sins and sinful pleasures which end in shame; they omit nothing

¹ 2 Kgs. iv. 38. ² Josh. vii. 2. ³ Gen. xxviii. 10, 19.

⁴ 1b. xxxv. 1 and 9.

⁵ Jud. xx. 26, 7.

⁶ Jud. xxi. 19. ⁷ Zeph. i. 5.

⁸ xx. 39. ⁹ i. 22.

¹⁰ אהבהו is probably one of the earliest forms of the intensive verb, repeating a part of a verb itself, with its inflection.

Before
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* her † rulers with shame do
love, Give ye.

- Mic. 3. 11. & 7. 19 *The wind hath
† Heb. shields, bound her up in her wings,
Pa. 47. 9. & † they shall be ashamed
• Jer. 4. 11, 12. & because of their sacrifices.
51. 1.
• Isai. 1. 29.
Jer. 2. 26.

CHAPTER V.

1 God's judgments against the
priests, the people, and the

which brings it, do nothing which can avoid it. What else or what more could they do, if they loved the shame for its own sake?

19. *The wind hath bound her up in her wings.* When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He bare them on eagle's wings, and brought them unto Himself¹. Now they had abandoned God, and God abandoned them as chaff to the wind. The certainty of Israel's doom is denoted by its being spoken of in the past. It was certain in the Divine judgment. Sudden, resistless, irreversible are God's judgments, when they come. As if "imprisoned in the viewless winds, and" borne "with resistless violence," as it were on the wings of the whirlwind, Israel should be hurried by the mighty wrath of God into captivity in a distant land, bound up so that none should escape, but, when arrived there, dispersed hither and thither, as the chaff before the wind.

And they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices. They had sacrificed to the calves, to Baal, or to the sun, moon, stars, hoping aid from them rather than from God. When then they should see, in deed, that from those their sacrifices no good came to them, but evil only, they should be healthfully ashamed. So, in fact, in her captivity, did Israel learn to be ashamed of her idols; and so does God, by healthful disappointment, make us ashamed of seeking out of Him, the good things, which He alone hath, and hath in store for them who love Him.

V. 1. *Hear ye this, O ye priests.* God, with the solemn threefold summons, arraigns anew all classes in Israel before Him, not now to repentance but to judgment. Neither the religious privileges of the priests, nor the multitude of the people, nor the civil dignity of the king, should exempt any from God's judgment. The priests are, probably, the true but corrupted priests of God, who had fallen away to the idolatries with which they were surrounded, and, by their apostasy, had strengthened them. The king, here first

princes of Israel, for their manifold sins, 15 until they repent.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 780.

HEAR ye this, O priests;
and hearken, ye house
of Israel; and give ye ear,
O house of the king; for
judgment is toward you,
because * ye have been a * ch. a. a.
snare on Mizpah, and a net
spread upon Tabor.

mentioned by Hosea, was probably the unhappy Zechariah, a weak, pliant, self-indulgent, drunken scoffer², who, after eleven years of anarchy, succeeded his father, only to be murdered.

For judgment is toward you, lit. the judgment. The kings and the priests had hitherto been the judges; now they were summoned before Him, Who is the Judge of judges, and the King of kings. To teach the law was part of the priest's office; to enforce it, belonged to the king. The guilt of both was enhanced, in that they, being so entrusted with it, had corrupted it. They had the greatest sin, as being the seducers of the people, and therefore have the severest sentence. The Prophet, dropping for the time the mention of the people, pronounces the judgment on the seducers.

Because ye have been a snare on Mizpah. Mizpah, the scene of the solemn covenant of Jacob with Laban, and of his signal protection by God, lay in the mountainous part of Gilead on the East of Jordan. Tabor was the well-known Mountain of the Transfiguration, which rises out of the midst of the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, one thousand feet high, in the form of a sugar-loaf. Of Mount Tabor it is related by S. Jerome, that birds were still snared upon it. But something more seems intended than the mere likeness of birds, taken in the snare of a fowler. This was to be seen everywhere; and so, had this been all, there hath no ground to mention these two historical spots. The Prophets have selected places on both sides of Jordan, which were probably centres of corruption, or special scenes of wickedness. Mizpah, being a sacred place in the history of the Patriarch Jacob³, was probably, like Gilgal and other sacred places, desecrated by idolatry. Tabor was the scene of God's deliverance of Israel by Barak⁴. There, by encouraging idolatries, they became hunters, not pastors, of souls⁵. There is an old Jewish tradition⁶, that lyers-in-wait were set in these two places, to intercept and murder

¹ Ex. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11. ² See Introd. p. 15.
³ Gen. xxxi. 23-49. ⁴ Jud. iv. ⁵ Ezek. xiii. 18, 20.

⁶ Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimchi "out of ancienter Rabbins." Poc.

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2 And the revolvers are
profound to make slaughter,
|| though I have been
† a rebuker of them all.

3 I know Ephraim, and
Israel is not hid from me :

† Isai. 29. 15.
† Or, and, &c.
† Heb. a correction.
* Amos 3, 2.

those Israelites, who would go up to worship at Jerusalem. And this tradition gains countenance from the mention of slaughter in the next verse.

2. And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter; lit. "*They made the slaughter deep*," as Isaiiah says, "*they deeply corrupted themselves*;" and our old writers say "He smote deep." They willed also doubtless to "make it deep," hide it so deep, that God should never know it, as the Psalmist says of the ungodly, "*that the inward self and heart of the workers of iniquity is deep*," whereon it follows, that God should suddenly wound them, as here the prophet subjoins that God rebuked them. Actual and profuse murder has been already² mentioned as one of the common sins of Israel, and it is afterward³ also charged upon the priests.

Though I have been a rebuker, lit. a rebuke, as the Psalmist says⁴, *I am prayer*, i.e. "I am all prayer." The Psalmist's whole being was turned into prayer. So here, all the attributes of God, His mercies, love, justice, were concentrated into one, and that one, rebuke. Rebuke was the one form, in which they were all seen. It is an aggravation of crime to do it in the place of judgment or in the presence of the judge. Israel was immersed in his sin and heeded not, although God rebuked him continually by His voice in the law, forbidding all idolatry, and was now all the while, both in word and deed, rebuking him.

3. *I know Ephraim*. There is much emphasis on the *I*. It is like our, "*I have known*," or "*I, I, have known*." God had known him all along, if we may so speak. However deep they may have laid their plans of blood, however they would or do hide them from man, and think that no Eye seeth them, and say, *Who seeth me? and who knoweth me? I, to Whose Eyes all things are naked and opened*⁵, have all along known them, and nothing of them has been hid from Me. For, He adds, even now, now when, under a fair outward shew, they are veiling the depth of their sin, now, when they think that their way is hid in darkness, I know their doings, that they are defiling themselves. Sin never wanted specious excuse. Now too unbelievers are mostly fond of precisely those characters in Holy Scripture, whom God condemns. Jeroboam

for now, O Ephraim, ^a thou
committest whoredom, and
Israel is defiled.

4 † || They will not frame
their doings to turn unto
their God : for ^o the spirit.

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^a Ezek. 23. 5. &c.
ch. 4. 17.
† Heb. They will not give.
† Or, Their doings will not suffer them.
ch. 4. 12.

doubtless was accounted a patriot, vindicating his country from oppressive taxation, which Rehoboam insolently threatened. Jerusalem, as lying in the Southernmost tribe, was represented, as ill-selected for the place of the assemblage of the tribes. Bethel, on the contrary, was hallowed by visions; it had been the abode, for a time, of the ark. It lay in the tribe of Ephraim, which they might think to have been unjustly deprived of its privilege. Dan was a provision for the Northern tribes. Such was the exterior. God says in answer, *I know Ephraim*. ⁶ *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*. Although (in some way unknown to us) not interfering with our free-will, known unto God are our thoughts and words and deeds, before they are framed, while they are framed, while they are being spoken and done; known to Him is all which we do, and all which, under any circumstances, we should do. This He knows with a knowledge, before the things were. ⁷ *All His creatures, corporeal or spiritual, He doth not therefore know, because they are; but they therefore are, because He knoweth them*. For He was not ignorant, what He was about to create; nor did He know them, after He had created them, in any other way than before. For no accession to His knowledge came from them; but, they existing when and as was meet, that knowledge remained as it was." How strange then to think of hiding from God a secret sin, when He knew, before He created thee, that He created thee liable to this very temptation, and to be assisted amidst it with just that grace which thou art resisting! God had known Israel, but it was not with the knowledge of love, of which He says, *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous*⁸, and ⁹ *if any man love God, the same is known of Him*, but with the knowledge of condemnation, whereby He, the Searcher of hearts, knows the sin which He judges.

4. *They will not frame their doings, &c.* They were possessed by an evil spirit, impelling and driving them to sin; *the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them*, i.e. in their very inward self, their centre, so to speak; in their souls, where reside the will, the reason, the judgment; and so long as they did not, by the strength of God, dislodge him, they

¹ xxxi. 6.

⁴ Ps. cix. 4.

² iv. 2.

³ vi. 9.

⁶ Heb. iv. 13.

⁵ Acts xv. 18.

⁸ Ps. i. 6.

⁷ S. Aug.

⁹ 1 Cor. viii. 3.

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of whoredoms is in the
midst of them, and they
have not known the
LORD.

'ch. 7. 10.

5 And 'the pride of Is-

would and could not frame their acts, so as to repent and turn to God. For a mightier impulse mastered them and drove them into sin, as the evil spirit drove the swine into the deep.

The rendering of the margin, although less agreeable to the Hebrew, also gives a striking sense. *Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God.* Not so much that their habits of sin had got an absolute mastery over them, so as to render repentance impossible; but rather, that it was impossible that they should turn inwardly, while they did not turn outwardly. Their evil doings, so long as they persevered in doing them, took away all heart, whereby to turn to God with a solid conversion.

And yet He was *their God*; this made their sin the more grievous. He, Whom they would not turn to, still owned them, was still ready to receive them as *their God*. For the Prophet continues, *and they have not known the Lord.* Him, *their God*, they knew not. For the spirit which possessed them hindered them from thought, from memory, from conception of spiritual things. They did not turn to God, 1) because the evil spirit held them, and so long as they allowed his hold, they were filled with carnal thoughts which kept them back from God. 2) They did not know God; so that, not knowing how good and how great a good He is in Himself, and how good to us, they had not even the desire to turn to Him, for love of Himself, yea even for love of themselves. They saw not, that they lost a loving God.

5. *And the pride of Israel.* Pride was from the first the leading sin of Ephraim. Together with Manasseh, (with whom they made, in some respects, one whole, as the *children of Joseph* ¹) they were nearly equal in number to Judah. When numbered in the wilderness, Judah had 74,600 fighting men, Ephraim and Manasseh together 72,700. They speak of themselves as a *great people, forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me hitherto* ². God having chosen, out of them, the leader under whom He brought Israel into the land of promise, they resented, in the following time of the Judges, any deliverance of the land, in which they were not called to take a part. They

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rael doth testify to his face:
therefore shall Israel and
Ephraim fall in their iniquity;
Judah also shall
fall with them.

chose with Gideon³, and suffered very severely for insolence⁴ to Jephthah and the Gileadites. When Gideon, who had refused to be king, was dead, Abimelech, his son by a concubine out of Ephraim, induced the Ephraimites to make Him king over Israel, as being *their bone and their flesh*⁵. Lying in the midst of the tribes to the North of Judah, they appear, in antagonism to Judah, to have gathered round them the other tribes, and to have taken, with them, the name of Israel, in contrast with Judah⁶. Shiloh, where the ark was, until taken by the Philistines, belonged to them. Samuel, the last judge, was raised up out of them⁷. Their political dignity was not aggrieved, when God gave Saul, out of *little Benjamin*, as king over His people. They could afford to own a king out of the least tribe. Their present political eminence was endangered, when God chose David out of their great rival, the tribe of Judah; their hope for the future was cut off by His promise to the posterity of David. They accordingly upheld, for seven years⁸, the house of Saul, knowing that they were acting against the Will of God⁹. Their religious importance was aggrieved by the removal of the ark to Zion, instead of its being restored to Shiloh¹⁰. Absalom won them by flattery¹¹; and the rebellion against David was a struggle of Israel¹² against Judah. When Absalom was dead, they had scarcely aided in bringing David back, when they fell away again, because their advice had not been first had in bringing him back¹³. Rehoboam was already king over Judah¹⁴, when he came to Shechem to be made king over Israel¹⁵. Then the ten tribes sent for Jeroboam of Ephraim¹⁶, to make him their spokesman, and, in the end, their king. The rival worship of Bethel provided, not only for the indolence, but for the pride of his tribe. He made a state-worship at Bethel, over-against the worship ordained by God at Jerusalem. Just before the time of Hosea, the political strength of Ephraim was so much superior to that of Judah, that Jehoash, in his pride, compared himself to the cedar of Lebanon, Amaziah king of Judah to the thistle¹⁷. Isaiah speaks of "jealousy¹⁸" or "envy," as the characteristic sin of Israel, which perpetuated that

¹ Josh. xvi. 4. xviii. 14.

² Jud. viii. 1 sqq.

³ Ib. viii. 31. ix. 1-3, 22.

⁴ 2 Sam. ii. 9, 10. iii. 17.

⁵ 2 Sam. v. 6. ⁶ Ib. iii. 9. ⁷ 1 Sam. i. 1.

⁸ Ps. lxxviii. 60, 67-69.

⁹ Josh. xviii. 14.

¹⁰ Ib. xii. 1 sqq.

¹¹ 2 Sam. xv. 2, 5, 10, 12, 13.

¹² xvi. 15. xvii. 15. xviii. 6.

¹³ Ib. xix. 41-3. xx. 1, 2.

¹⁴ 1 Kgs. xii. 1.

¹⁵ 2 Kgs. xiv. 9.

¹⁶ 1 Kgs. xi. 43.

¹⁷ 1 Kgs. xi. 26.

¹⁸ xl. 13.

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6 *They shall go with
their flocks and with their
herds to seek the LORD;

*Prov. 1. 28.
Isai. 1. 15.
Jer. 11. 11. Ezek. 8. 18. Mic. 3. 4. John 7. 34.

division, which, he foretold, should be healed in Christ. Yet although such was the power and pride of Israel, God foretold that he should first go into captivity, and so it was.

This pride, as it was the origin of the schism of the ten tribes, so it was the means of its continuance. In whatever degree any one of the kings of Israel was better than the rest, still *he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin.* The giving up of any other sin only shewed, how deeply rooted this sin was, which even then they would not give up. As is the way of unregenerate man, they would not give themselves up without reserve to God, to do *all* His will. They could not give up this sin of Jeroboam, without endangering their separate existence as *Israel*, and owning the superiority of Judah. From this complete self-surrender to God, their pride shrank and held them back.

The pride, which Israel thus shewed in refusing to turn to God, and in preferring their sin to *their God*, itself, he says, witnessed against them, and condemned them. In the presence of God, there needeth no other witness against the sinner than his own conscience. *It shall witness to his face*, "openly, publicly, themselves and all others seeing, acknowledging, and approving the just judgment of God and the recompense of their sin." Pride and carnal sin are here remarkably united.

"The Prophet having said, *the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them*, assigns as its ground, *the pride of Israel will testify to his face*, i.e. the sin which, through pride of mind, lurked in secret, bore open witness through sin of the flesh. Wherefore the cleanness of chastity is to be preserved by guarding humility. For if the spirit is piously humbled before God, the flesh is not raised unlawfully above the spirit. For the spirit holds the dominion over the flesh, committed to it, if it acknowledges the claims of lawful servitude to the Lord. For if, through pride, it despises its Author, it justly incurs a contest with its subject, the flesh."

Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in [or by] their iniquity. Ephraim, the chief of the ten tribes, is distinguished from the whole, of which it was a part, because it was the rival of Judah, the royal tribe, out of which Jeroboam had sprung, who had formed the kingdom of Israel by the schism from Judah. All Israel, even its royal tribe, where was Sama-

but they shall not find *him*;
he hath withdrawn himself
from them.

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ria, its capital and strength, should fall, their iniquity being the stumbling-block, on which they should fall.

Judah also shall fall with them. "Judah also, being partaker with them in their idolatry and their wickedness, shall partake with them in the like punishment. Sin shall have the like effect in both." Literally, he saith, *Judah hath fallen*, denoting, as do other prophets, the certainty of the future event, by speaking of it, as having taken place already; as it had, in the Mind of God.

6. *They shall go with their flocks.* "They had let slip the day of grace, wherein God had called them to repentance, and promised to be found of them and to accept them. When then the decree was gone forth and judgment determined against them, all their outward shew of worship and late repentance shall not prevail to gain admittance for them to Him. He will not be found of them, hear them, nor accept them. They stopped their ears obstinately against Him calling on them, and proffering mercy in the day of mercy: He will now stop His ear against them, crying for it in the Day of judgment." Repenting thus late, (as is the case with most who repent, or think that they repent, at the close of life) they did not repent out of the love of God, but out of slavish fear, on account of the calamity which was coming upon them. But the main truth, contained in this and other passages of Holy Scripture which speak of a time when it is too late to turn to God, is this: that "it shall be too late to knock when the door shall be shut, and too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice." God waits long for sinners; He threatens long before He strikes; He strikes and pierces in lesser degrees, and with increasing severity, before the final blow comes. In this life, He places man in a new state of trial, even after His first judgments have fallen on the sinner. But the general rule of His dealings is this; that, when the time of each judgment is actually come, then, as to *that* judgment, it is too late to pray. It is *not* too late for other mercy, or for final forgiveness, so long as man's state of probation lasts; but it is too late as to this one. And thus, each judgment in time is a picture of the Eternal Judgment, when the day of mercy is past for ever, to those who have finally, in this life, hardened themselves against it. But temporal mercies correspond with temporal judgments; eternal mercy with

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7 They have ^bdealt
treacherously against the
LORD: for they have be-
gotten strange children:

^b Isai. 48. 8.
Jer. 3. 20. & 5.
11.
ch. 6. 7.
Mal. 2. 11.

eternal judgment. In time, it may be too late to turn away temporal judgments; it is not too late, while God continues grace, to flee from eternal; and the desire not to lose God, is a proof to the soul that it is not forsaken by God, by Whom alone the longing for Himself is kept alive or re-awakened in His creature.

They shall not find Him. This befell the Jews in the time of Josiah. Josiah himself ¹ turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses. He put away idolatry thoroughly; and the people so far followed his example. He held such a Passover, as had not been held since the time of the judges. Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

The Prophet describes the people, as complying with God's commands; *they shall go, i.e. to the place which God had chosen and commanded, with their flocks and their herds, i.e. with the most costly sacrifices, the flocks supplying the sheep and goats prescribed by the law; the herds supplying the bullocks, calves and heifers offered.* They seem to have come, so far, sincerely. Yet perhaps it is not without further meaning, that the Prophet speaks of those outward sacrifices only, not of the heart; and the reformation under Josiah may therefore have failed, because the people were too ingrained with sin under Manasseh, and returned outwardly only under Josiah, as they fell back again after his death. And so God speaketh here, as He does by David ², *I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he-goat out of thy fold. Thinkest thou, that I will eat bulls' flesh, or drink the blood of goats?* and by Isaiah ³, *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts.*

He hath withdrawn Himself from them. Perhaps he would say, that God, as it were, freed Himself from them, as He saith in Isaiah ⁴, *I am weary to bear them, the union of sacrifices and of sin.*

¹ 2 Kgs xxxiii. 25-27.
² 1. 11.

³ Ps. i. 9, 13.
⁴ 1. 14.

now shall ^aa month devour
them with their portions.

Before
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8 ^aBlow ye the cornet ¹in Gibeah, and the trumpet

Zech. 11. 8.
²ch. 8. 1.
Joel 2. 1.

7. *They have dealt treacherously*; lit. *have cloaked*, and so, acted deceitfully. The word is used of treachery of friend towards his friend, of the husband to his wife, or the wife to her husband ⁵. *Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.* God, even in His upbraiding, speaks very tenderly to them, as having been in the closest, dearest relation to Himself.

For they have begotten strange children. God had made it a ground of the future blessing of Abraham ⁶, *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.* But these, contrariwise, themselves being idolaters and estranged from God, had children, who fell away like themselves, strangers to God, and looked upon as strangers by Him. The children too of the forbidden marriages with the heathen were, by their birth, *strange* or foreign children, even before they became so in act; and they became so the more in act, because they were so by birth. The next generation then growing up more estranged from God than themselves, what hope of amendment was there?

Now shall a month devour. The word *now* denotes the nearness and suddenness of God's judgments; the term *month*, their rapidity. A *month* is not only a brief time, but is almost visibly passing away; the moon, which measures it, is never at one stay, waxing till it is full, then waning till it disappears. Night by night bears witness to the month's decay. The iniquity was full; the harvest was ripe; *now*, suddenly, rapidly, completely, the end should come. One month should devour them with their portions. God willed to be the Portion of His people; He had said ⁷, *the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.* To Himself He had given the title ⁸, *the portion of Jacob.* Israel had chosen to himself *other portions* out of God; for these, he had forsaken his God; therefore he should be consumed with them. "All that they had, all that they possessed, enjoyed, trusted in, all, at once, shall that short space, suddenly and certainly to come, devour, deprive and bereave them of; none of them shall remain with them or profit them in the Day of wrath."

8. *Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah.* The evil

⁵ Jer. iii. 20.
⁷ Deut. xxxii. 9.

⁶ Gen. xviii. 19.
⁸ Jer. x. 16.

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¹ Isai. 10. 30.
² Josh. 7. 2.
ch. 4. 15.
³ Judg. 5. 14.

in Rama: ¹ cry aloud at
² Bethaven, ³ after thee, O
Benjamin.

9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.

10 The princes of Judah

day and destruction, denounced, is now vividly pictured, as actually come. All is in confusion, hurry, alarm, because the enemy was in the midst of them. The *cornet*, an instrument made of horn, was to be blown as the alarm, when the enemy was at hand. The *trumpet* was especially used for the worship of God. *Gibeah* and *Ramah* were cities of Benjamin, on the borders of Ephraim, where the enemy, who had possessed himself of Israel, would burst in upon Judah. From *Beth-aven* or Bethel, the seat of Ephraim's idolatry, on the border of Benjamin, was to break forth the outcry of destruction, *after thee, O Benjamin*; the enemy is upon thee, just behind thee, pursuing thee. God had promised His people, if they would serve Him ¹, *I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee*, and had threatened the contrary, if they should *walk contrary to Him*. Now that threat was to be fulfilled to the uttermost. The ten tribes are spoken of, as already in possession of the enemy, and he was upon Benjamin fleeing before them.

9. *Ephraim shall be desolate*. It shall not be lightly rebuked, nor even more grievously chastened; it shall not simply be wasted by famine, pestilence, and the sword; it shall be not simply desolate, but *a desolation*, one waste, in the day of rebuke, when God brings home to it its sin and punishment. Ephraim was not taken away for a time; it was never restored.

I have made known that which shall surely be. ² Doubt not that this which I say shall come upon thee, for it is a sure saying which I have made known; ³ lit. one well-grounded, as it was, in the mind, the justice, the holiness, the truth of God. All God's threatenings or promises are grounded in past experience. So it may also be, as though God said, "Whatever I have hitherto promised or threatened to Israel, has come to pass. In all I have proved Myself true. Let no one then flatter himself, as though this were uncertain; for in this, as in the rest, I shall be found to be God, faithful and true."

10. *The princes of Judah were like them that*

¹ Ex. xxiii. 27.

² Rup.

were like them that ^o remove the bound: *therefore*

Before
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I will pour out my wrath ^o Deut. 19. 14. &
upon them like water. 27. 17.

11 Ephraim is ^oop-^o Deut. 28. 33.
pressed and broken in
judgment, because he will-
ingly walked after ^o the ^o 1 Kgs. 12. 28.
commandment. Mic. 2. 16.

remove the bound. All avaricious encroachment on the paternal inheritance of others, was strictly forbidden by God in the law, under the penalty of His curse. ³ *Cursed is he that removeth his neighbor's landmark*. The *princes of Judah*, i.e. those who were the king's counsellors and chief in the civil polity, had committed sin, like to this. Since the prophet had just pronounced the desolation of Israel, perhaps that sin was, that instead of taking warning from the threatened destruction, and turning to God, they thought only how the removal of Ephraim would benefit them, by the enlargement of their borders. They might hope also to increase their private estates out of the desolate lands of Ephraim, their brother. The unregenerate heart, instead of being awed by God's judgment on others, looks out to see, what advantages it may gain from them. Times of calamity are also times of greediness. Israel had been a continual sore to Judah. The princes of Judah rejoiced in the prospect of their removal, instead of mourning their sin and fearing for themselves. More widely yet, the words may mean, that the *princes of Judah* "burst all bounds, set to them by the law of God, to which nothing was to be added, from which nothing was to be diminished," transferring to idols or devils, to sun, moon and stars, or to the beings supposed to preside over them, the love, honor, and worship, due to God Alone.

I will pour out My wrath like water. So long as those bounds were not broken through, the Justice of God, although manifoldly provoked, was yet stayed. When Judah should break them, they would, as it were, make a way for the chastisement of God, which should burst in like a flood upon them, overspreading the whole land, yet bringing, not renewed life, but death. Like a flood, it overwhelmed the land; but it was a flood, not of water, but of the wrath of God. They had burst the bounds which divided them from Israel, and had let in upon themselves its chastisements.

11. *Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judg-*

^o Deut. xxvii. 17.

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12 Therefore will I be
unto Ephraim as a moth,
and to the house of Judah
as || rottenness.

* Prov. 12. 4.
| Or, a worm.

13 When Ephraim saw
his sickness, and Judah saw

his 'wound, then went
Ephraim 'to the Assyrian,
'and sent || to king Jareb :
yet could he not heal
you, nor cure you of your
wound.

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Jer. 30. 12.
* 2 Kings 15.
19. ch. 7. 11.
& 12. 1.
* ch. 10. 6.
| Or, to the king
of Jareb; or,
to the king
that should plead.

ment, lit. *crushed in judgment*. Holy Scripture, elsewhere also, combines these same two words, rendered *oppressed* and *crushed*¹, in speaking of man's oppression by man. Ephraim preferred man's commands and laws to God's; they obeyed man and set God at nought; therefore they should suffer at man's hands, who, while he equally neglected God's will, enforced his own. The commandment, which Ephraim willingly went after, was doubtless that of Jeroboam²; *It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought you out of the land of Egypt; and Jeroboam ordained a feast unto the children of Israel*. Through this commandment, Jeroboam earned the dreadful title, who made Israel to sin. And Israel went willingly after it, for it is said; *This thing became a sin; and the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan*: i.e. while they readily accepted Jeroboam's plea. *It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem, they went willingly to the Northernmost point of Palestine, even to Dan*. For this sin, God judged them justly, even through the unjust judgment of man. God mostly punishes, through their own choice, those who choose against His. The Jews said, *we have no king but Caesar*, and Caesar destroyed them.

12. Therefore I will be unto Ephraim a moth, lit. and I as a moth. This form of speaking expresses what God was doing, while Ephraim was willingly following sin. And I was all the while as a moth. The moth in a garment, and the decay in wood, corrode and prey upon the substance, in which they lie hid, slowly, imperceptibly, but, at the last, effectually. Such were God's first judgments on Israel and Judah; such are they now commonly upon sinners. He tried, and now too tries at first, gentle measures and mild chastisements, uneasy indeed and troublesome and painful, yet slow in their working; each stage of loss and decay, a little beyond that which preceded it; but leaving long respite and time for repentance, before they finally wear out and destroy the impenitent. The two images, which He uses, may describe different kinds of decay, both slow, yet the one slower than the other, as Judah was, in

fact, destroyed more slowly than Ephraim. For the *rotteness*, or caries in wood, preys more slowly upon wood, which is hard, than the moth on the wool. So God visits the soul with different distresses, bodily or spiritual. He impairs, little by little, health of body, or fineness of understanding; or He withdraws grace or spiritual strength; or allows lukewarmness and distaste for the things of God to creep over the soul. These are the gnawing of the moth, overlooked by the sinner, if he persevere in carelessness as to his conscience, yet in the end, bringing entire decay of health, of understanding, of heart, of mind, unless God interfere by the mightier mercy of some heavy chastisement, to awaken him. "A moth does mischief, and makes no sound. So the minds of the wicked, in that they neglect to take account of their losses, lose their soundness, as it were, without knowing it. For they lose innocency from the heart, truth from the lips, continency from the flesh, and, as time holds on, life from their age." To Israel and Judah the moth and rottenness denoted the slow decay, by which they were gradually weakened, until they were carried away captive.

13. When Ephraim saw his sickness, lit. And Ephraim saw, i.e. perceived it. God proceeds to tell them, how they acted when they felt those lighter afflictions, the decline and wasting of their power. The sickness may further mean the gradual inward decay; the wound, blows received from without.

And sent to king Jareb, or, as in the E. M. a king who should plead, or, an avenging king. The hostile king is, probably, the same Assyrian Monarch, whom both Israel and Judah courted, who was the destruction of Israel and who weakened Judah. Ahaz king of Judah did send to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria to come and save him³, when the Lord brought Judah low; and Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came unto him and distressed him, but strengthened him not. He who held his throne from God sent to a heathen king⁴, I am thy servant and thy son; come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. He emptied his own treasures,

¹ Deut. xxviii. 33. 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4. Is. lviii. 6 Am. iv. 1. פֶּשַׁע and its derivatives are scarcely used of anything else.

² 1 Kgs xii. 28, 32, 33.

³ S. Greg. on Job iv. 19.

⁴ 2 Chr. xxviii. 19, 20.

⁵ 2 Kings xvi. 7, 8.

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* Lam. 3. 10.
ch. 13. 7, 8.
* Ps. 50. 22.

14 For *I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: *I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.

and pillaged the house of God, in order to buy the help of the Assyrian, and he taught him an evil lesson against himself, of his wealth and his weakness. God had said that, if they were faithful ¹, *five shall chase an hundred, and an hundred put ten thousand to flight.* He had pronounced him *cursed, who trusted in man, and made flesh his arm, and whose heart departed from the Lord* ². But Judah sought man's help, not only apart from God, but against God. God was bringing them down, and they, by man's aid, would lift themselves up. *The king became an avenger, for "whoso, when God is angry, striveth to gain man as his helper, findeth him God's avenger, who leudeth into captivity God's deserters, as though he were sworn to avenge God."*

14. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion. He who would thus strengthen himself by outward help against God's chastisements, challenges, as it were, the Almighty to a trial of strength. So then God, unwilling to abandon him to himself, changes His dealings, and "He Who had heretofore, in His judgments, seemed but as a tender moth or a weak worm," now shews forth His resistless power, imaged by His creatures in whom the quality of power is most seen. It may again be, that the fiercer animal (lit. *the roaring*) is associated with the name of Ephraim; that of the younger lion, fierce and eager for prey, yet not full-grown, with that of Judah.

I, I will tear. It is a fearful thing, to fall into the Hands of the Living God ³. The Assyrian was but the rod of God's anger, and the staff, He says, *in thine hand is His indignation* ⁴. Whatever is done, is done or overruled by God, Who gives to the evil his power to do, in an evil way, what He Himself overrules to the end of His wisdom or justice. God, Himself would tear them asunder, by giving the Assyrians power to carry them away. And since it was God Who did it, there was no hope of escape. He Who was faithful to his word would do it. There is great emphasis on the *I, I*. God and not man; He, the author of all good, would Himself be the Cause of their evil. What hope then is there, when He, Who is Mercy, becomes the Avenger?

¹ Lev. xxvi. 8.

² Jer. xvii. 5.

³ Rup.

15 ¶ I will go and return to my place, † till *they acknowledge † their offence, and seek *my face: *in their affliction they will seek me early.

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Heb. *till they be guilty.*
Lev. 25. 40, 41.
Jer. 29. 12, 13.
Ezek. 6. 9.
& 20. 43.
& 30. 31.
* Ps. 78. 34.

15. *I will go and return to My place.* As the wild beast, when he has taken his prey, returns to his covert, so God, when He had fulfilled His Will, would, for the time, withdraw all tokens of his Presence. God, Who is wholly everywhere, is said to dwell there, relatively to us, where He manifests Himself, as of old, in the Tabernacle, the Temple, Zion, Jerusalem. He is said to *go and return*, when He withdraws all tokens of His Presence, His help, care, and Providence. This is worse than any affliction on God's part, "a state like theirs who, in the lowest part of hell, are delivered into chains of darkness, shut out from His Presence, and so from all hope of comfort; and this must needs be their condition, so long as He shall be absent from them; and so perpetually, except there be a way for obtaining again His favorable Presence."

Till they acknowledge their offence. "He Who hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live, withdraws Himself from him, not to cast them off altogether, but that they might know and acknowledge their folly and wickedness, and, seeing there is no comfort out of Him, prefer His Presence to those vain things," which they had preferred to Him. To say, that God would hide His Face from them, *till they should acknowledge their offence*, holds out in itself a gleam of hope, that hereafter they would turn to Him, and would find Him.

And seek My Face. The first step in repentance is confession of sin; the second, turning to God. For to own sin without turning to God is the despair of Judas.

In their affliction they shall seek Me early. God does not only leave them hopes, that He would shew forth his Presence, when they sought him, but He promises that they shall seek Him, i. e. He would give them His grace whereby alone they could seek Him, and that grace should be effectual. Of itself affliction drives to despair and more obdurate rebellion and final impenitence. Through the grace of God, "evil brings forth good; fear, love; chastisement, repentance." *They shall seek Me early*, originally, *in the morning*, i. e. with all diligence and earnestness, as a

⁴ Poc.

⁵ Heb. x. 31.

⁶ Isa. x. 5.

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CHAPTER VI.

- 1 *An exhortation to repentance.*
4 *A complaint of their untowardness and iniquity.*

* Deut. 32. 39.
1 Sam. 2. 6.
Job 5. 18.
ch. 5. 14.
Jer. 30. 17.

COME, and let us return
unto the LORD: for
he hath torn, and he

man riseth early to do what he is very much set upon. So these shall "shake off the sleep of sin and the torpor of listlessness, when the light of repentance shall shine upon them."

This was fulfilled in the two tribes, toward the end of the seventy years, when many doubtless, together with Daniel¹, set their face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes; and again in, those² who waited for redemption in Jerusalem, when our Lord came; and it will be fulfillment in all at the end of the world. "The first flash of thought on the power and goodness of the true Deliverer, is like the morning streaks of a new day. At the sight of that light, Israel shall arise early to seek his God; he shall rise quickly like the Prodigal, out of his wanderings and his indigence."

VI. 1. *Come and let us return unto the Lord.* These words depend closely on the foregoing. They are words put into their mouth by God Himself, with which or with the like, they should exhort one another to return to God. Before, when God smote them, they had gone to Assyria; now they should turn to Him, owning, not only that He Who tore has the power and the will to heal them, but that He tore, in order to heal them; He smote them, in order to bind them up. This closeness of connection is expressed in the last words; lit. *smite He and He will bind us up.* "He smiteth the putrefaction of the misdeed; He healeth the pain of the wound. Physicians do this; they cut; they smite; they heal; they arm themselves in order to strike; they carry steel, and come to cure."

They are not content to return singly or to be saved alone. Each encourageth another to repentance, as before to evil. The dry bones, scattered on the face of the earth, reunite. There is a general movement among those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, to return together to Him, Who is the Source of life.

2. *After two days will He revive us or quicken us, give us life, in the third day He will raise us up.* The Resurrection of Christ, and our resurrection in Him and in His Resurrection, could not be more plainly foretold. The Prophet expressly mentions two days, after

will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

2 ° After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

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which life should be given, and a third day, on which the resurrection should take place. What else can this be than the two days in which the Body of Christ lay in the tomb, and the third day, on which He rose again, as *the Resurrection and the life, the first fruits of them that slept*, the source and earnest and pledge of our resurrection and of life eternal? The Apostle, in speaking of our resurrection in Christ, uses these self-same words of the Prophet; *God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us—hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* The Apostle, like the Prophet, speaks of that which took place in Christ our Head, as having already taken place in us, His members. "If we unhesitatingly believe in our heart," says a father³, "what we profess with our mouth, we were crucified in Christ, we died, we were buried, we also were raised again on that very third day. Whence the Apostle saith⁴, *If ye rose again with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.*" As Christ died for us, so He also rose for us. "Our old man was nailed to the wood, in the flesh of our Head, and the new man was formed in that same Head, rising glorious from the tomb." What Christ, our Head, did, He did, not for Himself, but for His redeemed, that the benefits of His Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, might redound to all. He did it for them; they partook of what He did. In no other way, could our participation of Christ be foretold. It was not the Prophet's object here, nor was it so direct a comfort to Israel, to speak of Christ's Resurrection in itself. He took a nearer way to their hearts. He told them, "all we who turn to the Lord, putting our whole trust in Him, and committing ourselves wholly to Him, to be healed of our wounds and to have our griefs bound up, shall receive life from Him, shall be raised up by Him." They could not understand then, how He would do this. The after two days and, in the third day, remained a mystery, to be explained by the event. But the promise itself was not the less distinct, nor the less full of hope, nor did it less fulfill all cravings for

¹ Dan. ix. 2. 3.
² S. Luke ii. 28, 38.

³ S. John xi. 25. ⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 20. ⁵ Eph. ii. 4-6.
⁶ S. Leo. ⁷ Col. iii. 1.

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3 ⁴ Then shall we know,

if we follow on to know the

⁴ Is. 54. 13.

LORD: his going forth is

² Sam. 23. 4.

prepared ⁵ as the morning;

and ⁶ he shall come unto us

⁷ as the rain, as the latter

and former rain unto the

earth.

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⁸ Ps. 72. 6.

⁹ Job 29. 23.

life eternal and the sight of God, because they did not understand, *how shall these things be.* Faith is unconcerned about the "how." Faith believes what God says, because He says it, and leaves Him to fulfill it, "how" He wills and knows. The words of the promise which faith had to believe, were plain. The life of which the Prophet spoke, could only be life from death, whether of the body or the soul or both. For God is said to *give life*, only in contrast with such death. Whence the Jews too have ever looked and do look, that this should be fulfilled in the Christ, though they know not that it has been fulfilled in Him. They too explain it; "He will quicken us in the days of consolation which shall come; in the day of the quickening of the dead; He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him."

In shadow, the prophecy was never fulfilled to Israel at all. The ten tribes were never restored; they never, as a whole, received any favor from God, after He gave them up to captivity. And unto the two tribes, (of whom, apart from the ten, no mention is made here) what a mere shadow was the restoration from Babylon, that it should be spoken of as the gift of life or of resurrection, whereby we should live before Him! The strictest explanation is the truest. The two days and the third day have nothing in history to correspond with them, except that in which they were fulfilled, when Christ, "rising on the third day from the grave, raised with Him the whole human race."

And we shall live in His sight, lit. *before His Face*. In the face, we see the will, and mind, the love, the pleasure or displeasure of a human being whom we love. In the holy or loving face of man, there may be read fresh depths of devotion or of love. The face is turned away in sorrowful displeasure; it is turned full upon the face it loves. Hence it is so very expressive an image of the relation of the soul to God, and the Psalmists so often pray, *Lord lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us; make Thy Face to shine upon Thy servant; God bless us, and cause His Face to shine upon us; cast me not away from Thy Presence or Face; look Thou upon me and be merciful unto me; look upon the Face of thine anointed; how long will Thou hide Thy Face*

*from me? hide not Thy Face from Thy servant*¹⁰; or they profess, *Thy Face, Lord, will I seek*¹¹; or they declare that the bliss of eternity is in the Face of God¹².

God had just said, that He would withdraw His Presence, until they should seek His Face; now He says, they should live before His Face. To Abraham He had said¹³, *Walk before Me*, lit. *before My Face*, and be thou perfect. Bliss from the Creator, and duty from the creature, answer to one another. We live in His sight, in the way of duty, when we refer ourselves and our whole being, our courses of action, our thoughts, our love, to Him, remembering that we are ever in His Presence, and ever seeking to please Him. We live in His sight, in the bliss of His Presence, when we enjoy the sense of His favor, and know that His Eye rests on us in love, that He cares for us, guides us, guards us; and have some sweetness in contemplating Him. Much more fully shall we live in His sight, when, in Him, we shall be partakers of His Eternal Life and Bliss, and shall behold Him face to face, and see Him as He is, and the sight of Him shall be our bliss, and in His light we shall see light¹⁴.

3. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*; rather, *Then shall we know, shall follow on to know the Lord*, i. e. we shall not only know Him, but we shall grow continually in that knowledge. Then, in Israel, God says, *there was no knowledge of Him; His people was destroyed for lack of it*¹⁵. In Christ He promises, that they should have that inward knowledge of Him, ever growing, because the grace, through which it is given, ever grows, and the depth of the riches of His wisdom and knowledge is unsearchable, passing knowledge. We follow on, confessing that it is He who maketh us to follow Him, and draweth us to Him. We know, in order to follow; we follow, in order to know. Light prepares the way for love. Love opens the mind for new love. The gifts of God are interwoven. They multiply and reproduce each other, until we come to the perfect state of eternity. For here we know in part only; then shall we know, even as we are known. We shall follow on. Whither shall we follow on? To the fountains of the water of life, as another Prophet saith; *For He that hath*

¹ Targ.

² 8. Jer. so Tertull. adv. Jnd. c. 13. Orig. Hom. 5. in Exod. 8. Cyr. Test. ii. 25. 8. Cyr. Jer. Cat. xiv. 14. 8. Greg. Nyss. de cogn. Dei. 8. Aug. de Civ. D. xviii. 28. Ruf. de exp. Symb. 8. Cyr. Al. in 8. Joh. L. ii. 8. Greg. in Ezek. Hom. 20.

³ Ps. iv. 6; xxxi. 16 (from Num. vi. 25.); lxvii. 1. lxxx. 7. cxix. 135; li. 11; cxix. 132; lxxxiv. 9; xlii. 1. lxi. 17. &c.

⁴ Ps. xvii. 8. See xxiv. 6. cv. 4.

⁵ Ps. xi. 7. xvi. 11. xvii. 12.

⁶ Gen. xvii. 1. ⁷ Ps. xxxvii. 9. ⁸ ch. iv. 1, 6.

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ch. 11. 8.

4 ¶ ^a O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your

|| goodness is 'as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

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Or, mercy, or kindness.
ch. 13. 3.

mercy upon them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them¹. And in the Revelations we read, that the Lamb Who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters². The bliss of eternity is fixed; the nearness of each to the throne of God, the mansion in which he shall dwell, admits of no change; but, through eternity, it may be, that we shall follow on to know more of God, as more shall be revealed to us of that which is infinite, the Infinity of His Wisdom and His Love.

His going forth, i. e. the going forth of God, is prepared, firm, fixed, certain, established, (so the word means) as the morning. Before, God had said, He would withdraw Himself from them; now, contrariwise, He says, that He would go forth. He had said, in their affliction they shall seek Me early or in the morning; now, He shall go forth as the morning. "They shall seek for Him, as they that long for the morning; and He will come to them as the morning," full of joy and comfort, of light and warmth and glorious radiance, which shall diffuse over the whole compass of the world, so that nothing shall be hid from its light and heat. He Who should so go forth, is the same as He Who was to revive them and raise them up, i. e. Christ. Of Him it is said most strictly, that He went forth, when from the Bosom of the Father He came among us; as of Him holy Zacharias saith, (in the like language,) *The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* Christ goeth forth continually from the Father, by an eternal, continual, generation. In time, He came forth from the Father in His Incarnation; He came forth to us from the Virgin's womb; He came forth, from the grave in His Resurrection. His coming forth, as the morning, images the secrecy of His Birth, the light and glow of love which He diffuseth throughout the whole new creation of His redeemed. "As the dawn is seen by all and cannot be hid, and appeareth, that it may be seen, yea, that it may illuminate, so His going forth, whereby He proceeded from His own invisible to our visible condition, became known to all," tempered to our eyes, dissipating our darkness, awakening our nature as from a grave, unveiling to man the works of God, making His ways plain before his face, that he should no longer walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. So of Christ it is foretold³, *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth.* Palestine was especially dependent upon rain, on account of the cultivation of the sides of the hills in terraces, which were parched and dry, when the rains were withheld. The former, or autumnal rain, fell in October, at the seed-time; the latter or spring rain, in March and April, and filled the ears before harvest. Both together stand as the beginning and the end. If either were withheld, the harvest failed. Wonderful likeness of Him Who is the Beginning and the End of our spiritual life; from Whom we receive it, by Whom it is preserved unto the end; through Whom the soul, enriched by Him, hath abundance of all spiritual blessings, graces, and consolations, and yieldeth all manner of fruit, each after its kind, to the praise of Him Who hath given it life and fruitfulness.

4. *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?* It is common with the prophets, first to set forth the fullness of the riches of God's mercies in Christ, and then to turn to their own generation, and upbraid them for the sins which withheld the mercies of God from them, and were hurrying them to their destruction. In like way Isaiah⁴, having prophesied that the Gospel should go forth from Zion, turns to upbraid the avarice, idolatry, and pride, through which the judgment of God should come upon them.

The promises of God were to those who should turn with true repentance, and seek Him early and earnestly. Whatever of good there was, either in Ephraim or Judah, was but a mere empty shew, which held out hope, only to disappoint it. God, Who will not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, appeals to His whole people, *What shall I do unto thee?* He had shewn them abundance of mercies; He had reprieved them by His prophets; He had chastened them; and all in vain. As he says in Isaiah⁵, *What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Here He asks them Himself, what He could do to convert and to save them, which He had not done. He would take them on their own terms, and whatever they would prescribe to His Almighty and Wisdom, as means for their conversion, that He would use, so that they would but turn to Him. "What means

¹ Isa. xlii. 10. ² Rev. vii. 17. ³ Psa. lxxii. 6. ⁴ ch. ii. ⁵ ch. v.

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5 Therefore have I hewed
them * by the prophets; I
have slain them by 'the
words of my mouth: || and
| Or, that thy judgments might be, &c.

* Jer. 1. 10 & 5.

14.

1 Jer. 23. 29.

1 Heb. 4. 12.

| Or, that thy judgments might be, &c.

shall I use to save thee, who wilt not be saved?" It has been a bold saying, to describe the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, "Christ so loveth souls, that He would rather be crucified again, than allow any one (as far as in Him lies) to be damned."

For your goodness is as a morning cloud. Mercy or loving-kindness, (which the E. M. suggests as the first meaning of the word) stands for all virtue and goodness toward God or man. For love to God or man is one indivisible virtue, issuing from one principle of grace. Whence it is said¹, *love is the fulfilling of the law. He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* And², *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* Of this their goodness, he says the character was, that it never lasted. The morning cloud is full of brilliancy with the rays of the rising sun, yet quickly disappears through the heat of that sun, which gave it its rich hues. The morning dew glitters in that same sun, yet vanishes almost as soon as it appears. Generated by the cold of the night, it appears with the dawn; yet appears, only to disappear. So it was with the whole Jewish people: for it ever is with the most hopeless class of sinners; ever beginning anew, ever relapsing; ever making a show of leaves, good feelings, good aspirations, but yielding no fruit. "There was nothing of sound, sincere, real, lasting goodness in them;" no reality, but all shew; quickly assumed, quickly disused.

5. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets. Since they despised God's gentler warnings and measures, He used severer. He hewed them, He says, as men hew stones out of the quarry, and with hard blows and sharp instruments overcome the hardness of the stone which they have to work. Their piety and goodness were light and unsubstantial as a summer cloud; their stony hearts were harder than the material stone. The stone takes the shape which man would give it; God hews man in vain; he will not receive the image of God, for which and in which he was framed.

God, elsewhere also, likens the force and vehemence of His word to ³a hammer which breaketh the rocks in pieces; ⁴a sword which pierceth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. He ⁵continually hammered, beat

¹ Rom. xlii. 10, 8.

² Jer. xxiii. 29.

³ 1 S. John iv. 7.

⁴ Heb. iv. 12.

⁵ from Poc.

thy judgments are as the
light that goeth forth.

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6 For I desired ^a mercy,
and ^anot sacrifice; and

^a 1 Sam. 15. 22.

Eccles. 5. 1.

Mic. 6. 8.

Matt. 9. 23. &

12. 7. * Ps. 50. 8, 9. Prov. 21. 3. Is. 1. 11.

upon, disquieted them, and so vexed them (as they thought) even unto death, not allowing them to rest in their sins, not suffering them to enjoy themselves in them, but forcing them (as it were) to part with things which they loved as their lives, and would as soon part with their souls as with them."

And thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. The judgments here are the acts of justice executed upon a man; the "judgment upon him," as we say. God had done all which could be done, to lay aside the severity of His own judgments. All had failed. Then His judgments, when they came, would be manifestly just; their justice clear as the light which goeth forth out of the darkness of night, or out of the thick clouds. God's past loving-kindness, His pains, (so to speak,) His solicitations, the drawings of His grace, the tender mercies of His austere chastisements, will, in the Day of judgment, stand out clear as the light, and leave the sinner confounded, without excuse. In this life, also, God's final judgments are as a light which goeth forth, enlightening, not the sinner who perishes, but others, heretofore in the darkness of ignorance, on whom they burst with a sudden blaze of light, and who reverence them, owning that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether⁶.

And so, since they would not be reformed, what should have been for their wealth, was for their destruction. I slew them by the words of My mouth. God spake yet more terribly to them. He slew them in word, that He might not slay them in deed; He threatened them with death; since they repented not, it came. The stone, which will not take the form which should have been imparted to it, is destroyed by the strokes which should have moulded it. By a like image Jeremiah compared the Jews to ore which is consumed in the fire which should refine it; since there was no good in it. ⁷They are brass and iron; they are all corrupted; the bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.

6. For I desired mercy and not sacrifice. God had said before, that they should seek Him with their flocks and herds, and not find

⁶ Ps. xix. 9.

⁷ Jer. vi. 28-30.

Before the °knowledge of God
CHRIST
cir. 780. °Jer. 22. 16. John 17. 3.

more than burnt offerings. Before
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Him. So here He anticipates their excuses with the same answer wherewith He met those of Saul, when he would compensate for disobedience by burnt offerings. The answer is, that all which they did to win His favor, or turn aside His wrath, was of no avail, while they wilfully withheld what He required of them. Their mercy and goodness were but a brief, passing, shew; in vain He had tried to awaken them by His Prophets; therefore judgment was coming upon them; for, to turn it aside, they had offered Him what He desired not, sacrifices without love, and had not offered Him, what He did desire, love of man out of love for God. God had Himself, after the fall, enjoined sacrifice, to foreshew and plead to Himself the meritorious Sacrifice of Christ. He had not contrasted *mercy and sacrifice*, Who enjoined them both. When then they were contrasted, it was through man's severing what God united. If we were to say, "Charity is better than Church-going" we should be understood to mean that it is better than such Church-going as is severed from charity. For, if they were united, they would not be contrasted. The soul is of more value than the body. But it is not contrasted, unless they come in competition with one another, and their interests (although they cannot in trust be,) seem to be separated. In itself, *Sacrifice* represented all the direct duties to God, all the duties of the first table. For Sacrifice owned Him as the One God, to Whom, as His creatures, we owe and offer all; as His guilty creatures, it owned that we owed to Him our lives also. *Mercy* represented all duties of the second table. In saying then, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, he says, in effect, the same as S. John¹, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?* As the love, which a man pretended to have for God, was not real love, if a man loved not his brother, so *sacrifice* was not an offering, to God at all, while man withheld from God that offering, which God most required of him, the oblation of man's own self. They were, rather, offerings to satisfy and bribe a man's own conscience. Yet the Jews were profuse in making these sacrifices, which cost them little, hoping thereby to secure to themselves impunity in the wrongful gains, oppressions, and unmercifulnesses which they would not part with. It is with this contrast, that God so often rejects the sacrifices of the Jews, ² *To what*

purpose is the multitude of your oblations unto Me? Bring no more vain oblations unto Me; new moons and sabbaths, the culling of assemblings, I cannot away with; iniquity and the solemn meeting. ³ *I spake not to your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people.* And the Psalmist; ⁴ *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before Me. Offer unto God thanksgiving, &c.* But unto the wicked God saith, *What hast thou to do, to declare My statutes, &c.*

But, further, the prophet adds, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings. The two parts of the verse fill out one another, and the latter explains the former. The knowledge of God is, as before, no inactive head-knowledge, but that knowledge, of which S. John speaks, ⁵ *Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* It is a knowledge, such as they alone can have, who love God and do His Will. God says then, that He prefers the inward, loving, knowledge of Himself, and loving-kindness toward man, above the outward means of acceptableness with Himself, which He had appointed. He does not lower those His own appointments; but only when, emptied of the spirit of devotion, they were lifeless bodies, unensouled by His grace.

Yet the words of God go beyond the immediate occasion and bearing, in which they were first spoken. And so these words, ⁶ *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, are a sort of sacred proverb, contrasting *mercy*, which overflows the bounds of strict justice, with *sacrifice*, which represents that stern justice. Thus, when the Pharisees murmured at our Lord for eating with Publicans and sinners, He bade them, *Go and learn what that meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* He bade them learn that deeper meaning of the words, that God valued mercy for the souls for which Christ died, above that outward propriety, that He, the All-Holy, should not least familiarly with those who profaned God's law and themselves. Again, when they found fault with the hungry disciples for breaking the sabbath by rubbing the ears of corn, He, in the same way, tells them, that they did not know the real meaning of that saying. ⁷ *If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.* For as, before, they were envious as to mercy to the souls of sinners,

¹ 1 S. John iv. 20.
² Is. i. 11-3.

³ Jer. vii. 22, 3.
⁶ Eph. ii. 3.

⁴ Ps. l. 8. 14. 10.
⁷ 1b. xii. 7.

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7 But they || like men

have transgressed the
covenant: there have they
Or, like Adam.
Job 31. 33.
ch. 8. 1. ch. 5. 7.

so now they were reckless as to others' bodily needs. Without that love then, which shews itself in acts of mercy to the souls and bodies of men, all sacrifice is useless.

Mercy is also more comprehensive than sacrifice. For sacrifice was referred to God only, as its end; mercy, or love of man for the love of God, obeys God Who commands it; imitates God, "Whose property it is always to have mercy;" seeks God Who rewards it; promotes the glory of God, through the thanksgiving to God, from those whom it benefits. "Mercy leads man up to God, for mercy brought down God to man; mercy humbled God, exalts man." Mercy takes Christ as its pattern, Who, from His Holy Incarnation to His Precious Death on the Cross, *bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows*¹. Yet neither does mercy itself avail without true knowledge of God. For as mercy or love is the soul of all our acts, so true knowledge of God and faith in God are the source and soul of love. "Vain were it to boast that we have the other members, if faith, the head, were cut off?"

7. But they like men, or (better as in the E. M.) like Adam, have transgressed the covenant. As Adam our first parent, in Paradise, not out of any pressure, but wantonly, through self-will and pride, broke the covenant of God, eating the forbidden fruit, and then defended himself in his sin against God, casting the blame upon the woman: so these, in the good land which God had given them, that they should therein keep His covenant and observe His laws², wantonly and petulantly broke that covenant; and then obstinately defended their sin. Wherefore, as Adam was cast out of Paradise, so shall these be cast out of the land of promise.

There have they dealt treacherously against Me. There! He does not say, where. But Israel and every sinner in Israel knew full well, where. There, to Israel, was not only Bethel or Dan, or Gilgal, or Mizpah, or Gilead, or any or all of the places, which God had hallowed by His mercies, and they had defiled. It was every high hill, each idol-chapel, each field-altar, which they had multiplied to their idols. To the sinners of Israel, it was every spot of the Lord's land which they had defiled by their sin. God points out to the conscience of sinners the place and time, the very spot where they offended Him. Whosoever and whensoever they broke

dealt treacherously against
me.

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8 Gilead is a city of

ch. 12. 11.

God's commands, there they dealt treacherously against God Himself. There is much emphasis upon the *against Me*. The sinner, while breaking the laws of God, contrives to forget God. God recalls him to himself, and says, there, where and when thou didst those and those things, thou didst deal falsely with, and against, Me. The sinner's conscience and memory fills up the word there. It sees the whole landscape of its sins around; each black dark spot stands out before it, and it cries with David, there, in this and this and this, against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight³.

8. Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity. If we regard "Gilead" (as it elsewhere is,) as the country beyond Jordan, where the two tribes and a half dwelt, this will mean that the whole land was banded in one, as one city of evil-doers. It had an unity, but of evil. As the whole world has been pictured as divided between "the city of God" and the city of the devil, consisting respectively of the children of God and the children of the devil; so the whole of Gilead may be represented as one city, whose inhabitants had one occupation in common, to work evil. Some think that there was a city so called, although not mentioned elsewhere in Holy Scripture, near that Mount Gilead, dear to the memory of Israel, because God there protected their forefather Jacob. Some think that it was Ramoth in Gilead⁴, which God appointed as "a city of refuge," and which, consequently, became a city of Levites and priests⁵. Here, where God had preserved the life of their forefather, and, in him, had preserved them; here, where He had commanded the innocent shedder of blood to be saved; here, where He had appointed those to dwell, whom He had hallowed to Himself, all was turned to the exact contrary. It, which God had hallowed, was become a city of workers of iniquity, i. e. of men, whose habits and wont was to work iniquity. It, where God had appointed life to be preserved, was polluted or tracked with blood. Everywhere it was marked and stained with the bloody footsteps of those, who (as David said) put innocent blood in their shoes which were on their feet⁶, staining their shoes with blood which they shed, so that, wherever they went, they left marks and signs of it. Tracked with blood it was, through the sins of its inhabitants; tracked with blood it was again, when it first was taken

Gilead with it, since he supposes the prophet to speak of "the Province itself."

⁴ Jos. xxi. 38.

⁵ 1 Kgs ii. 5.

¹ Isa. lili. 4. ² S. Jer. ³ Ps. cv. 44. ⁴ 1b. li. 4.

⁵ Deut. iv. 43. Jos. xx. 8. S. Jerome instances Ramoth and the deeds there, but does not identify

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them that work iniquity,
and is || polluted with

|| Or, cunning for blood.

9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so * the company of priests murder in the way † by consent:

captive¹, and "it, which had swum with the innocent blood of others, swam with the guilty blood of its own people." It is a special sin, and especially avenged of God, when what God had hallowed, is made the scene of sin.

9. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent; or (more probably) in the way to Shechem². Shechem too was a "city of refuge³," and so also a city of Levites and priests⁴. It was an important city. For there Joshua assembled all Israel for his last address to them, and made a covenant with them⁵. There, Rehoboam came to be accepted by Israel as their king⁶, and was rejected by them. There Jeroboam after the schism, for a time, made his residence⁷. The priests were banded together; their counsel was one; they formed one company; but they were bound together as a band of robbers, not to save men's lives but to destroy them. Whereas the way to the cities of refuge was, by God's law, to be prepared⁸, clear, open, without let or hindrance to the guiltless fugitive, to save his life, the priests, the guardians of God's law, obstructed the way, to rob and destroy. They, whom God appointed to teach the truth that men might live, were banded together against His law.

Shechem, besides that it was a city of refuge, was also hallowed by the memory of histories of the patriarchs who walked with God. There, was Jacob's well⁹; there Joseph's bones were buried¹⁰; and the memory of the patriarch Jacob was cherished there, even to the time of our Lord¹¹. Lying in a narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, it was a witness, as it were, of the blessing and curse pronounced from them, and had, in the times of Joshua, an ancient sanctuary of God¹². It was a halting-place for the pilgrims of the northern tribes, in their way to the feasts at Jerusalem; so that these murders by the priests coincide with the tradition of the Jews, that they who would go

for they commit || lewdness.

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10 I have seen 'an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is * the whoredom of Ephraim; Israel is defiled.

Or, enormity.
Jer. 5. 30.
ch. 4. 12, 13, 17.

* Jer. 51. 33.
Joel 3. 13.
Rev. 14. 15.

11 Also, O Judah, * he

up to Jerusalem were murdered in the way.

For they commit lewdness, lit. For they have done deliberate sin¹³. The word literally means a thing thought of, especially an evil, and so, deliberate, contrived, bethought-of, wickedness. They did deliberate wickedness, gave themselves to do it, and did nothing else.

10. I have seen a horrible thing, lit. what would make one shudder. God had seen it; therefore man could not deny it. In the sight of God, and amid the sense of His Presence, all excuses fail.

In the house of Israel. "13 For what more horrible, more amazing than that this happened, not in any ordinary nation but in the house of Israel, in the people of God, in the portion of the Lord, as Moses said, the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance? In another nation, idolatry was error. In Israel, which had the knowledge of the one true God and had received the law, it was horror." There is the whoredom of Ephraim, widespread, over the whole land, wherever the house of Ephraim was, through the whole kingdom of the ten tribes, there was its spiritual adultery and defilement.

11. Also, O Judah, He hath set a harvest for thee, when I returned (rather, when I return) the captivity of My people.

The harvest may be either for good or for bad. If the harvest is spoken of, as bestowed upon the people, then, as being of chief moment for preserving the life of the body, it is a symbol of all manner of good, temporal or spiritual, bestowed by God. If the people is spoken of, as themselves being the harvest which is ripe and ready to be cut down, then it is a symbol of their being ripe in sin, ready for punishment, to be cut off by God's judgments. In this sense, it is said of Babylon¹⁴, Yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come; and of the heathen, put ye in the sickle, for their harvest is ripe, for their wickedness is great; and of the whole earth, the harvest of the earth is ripe. Here God must be

¹ 2 Kgs. xv. 29.

² This translation accounts for the grammatical form שָׁכֶם "towards Shechem;" (as in Gen. xxvii. 14. &c.). The consent of many in doing a thing is indeed expressed by saying "they did it with one shoulder," (Zeph. iii. 9.) Yet the word one (which is not used here,) is essential to the figure, which is, that many did the act, as if they were one.

³ Joh. xx. 7.

⁴ 1b. xxiv. 1. 25.

⁵ 1b. 25.

⁶ 8. Joh. iv. 5, 6.

⁷ 10. Josh. xxiv. 32.

⁸ 12 It is used of sins of the flesh in Lev. xix. 29. xx.

⁹ 14. Job xxxi. 11. and especially in Ezek.

¹⁰ 13. Rup.

¹¹ Joel iii. 13.

¹² 1b. xxi. 21.

¹³ 1 Kgs. xii. 1.

¹⁴ Deut. xix. 3.

¹⁵ 1b. 26.

¹⁶ 14. Jer. ii. 33.

¹⁷ Rev. xiv. 15.

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Ps. 125. 1.

hath set an harvest for
thee, when I returned

the captivity of my
people.

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speaking of a *harvest*, which he willed hereafter to give to Judah. For the time of the harvest was to be, when He should return the captivity of His people, restoring them out of their captivity, a time of His favor and of manifold blessings. A *harvest* then God appointed for Judah. But when? Not at that time, not for a long, long period, not for any time during the life of man, but at the end of the captivity of 70 years. God promises relief, but after suffering. Yet He casts a ray of light, even while threatening the intermediate darkness. He foreshews to them a future harvest, even while their coming lot was captivity and privation. Now Judah, His people, was entangled in the sins of Ephraim, and, like them, was to be punished. Suffering and chastisement were the condition of healing and restoration. But whereas the destruction of the kingdom of Israel was final, and they were no more to be restored as a whole, God Who loveth mercy, conveys the threat of impending punishment under the promise of future mercy. He had rich mercies in store for Judah, yet not until after the captivity, when He should again own them as *My people*. Meantime, there was withdrawal of the favor of God, distress, and want.

The distinction between Judah and Israel lay in the promise of God to David. ¹ *The Lord hath sworn in truth to David, He will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body wilt I set upon thy throne.* It lay in the counsels of God, but it was executed through those who knew not of those counsels. The ten tribes were carried away by the Assyrians into Media; Judah, by Nebuchadnezzar, into Babylon. The Babylonian empire, which, under Nebuchadnezzar, was the terror of Asia, was but a continuation of the Assyrian, being founded by a revolted Assyrian general². The seat of empire was removed, the policy was unchanged. In man's sight there was no hope that Babylon would give back her captives, any more than Assyria, or than the grave would give back her dead. To restore the Jews, was to reverse the human policy, which had removed them; it was to re-create an enemy; strong in his natural position, lying between themselves and Egypt, who could strengthen, if he willed, their great rival. The mixed multitude of Babylonians and others, whom the king of Assyria had settled in Samaria, in their letter to a successor of Cyrus, appealed to these fears,

and induced the impostor Smerdis to interrupt the restoration of Jerusalem. They say; ³ *We have sent and certified the king, that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers. So shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hateful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time; for which cause was this city destroyed.* The king did find in his records, that Judah had been of old powerful, and had refused the yoke of Babylon. ⁴ *I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition hath been made therein. There have been mighty kings over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river, and toll, tribute, and custom, hath been given to them. Conquerors do not think of restoring their slaves, nor of reversing their policy, even when there is no constraining motive to persevere in it. What is done, remains. This policy of transplanting nations, when once begun, was adopted, as a regular part of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian policy⁵. Yet no case is known, in which the people once removed were permitted to return, save the Jews. But God first foretold, that Cyrus should restore His people and build His temple; then, through men's wills He ordered the overthrow of empires. Cyrus overcame the league against him, and destroyed first the Lydian, then the Babykionian, empire. God then brought to his knowledge the prophecy concerning him, given by Isaiah 178 years before, and disposed his heart to do, what Isaiah had foretold that he should do. *Cyrus made his proclamation throughout all his kingdom. The terms were ample. Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God) which is in Jerusalem. The proclamation must have reached the cities of the Medes, where the ten tribes were. But they only, whose spirit God had raised, returned to their land. Israel remained, of his own free will, behind; and fulfilled unwittingly the prophecy that they should be wanderers among the nations, while in Judah the Lord brought again the captivity of His people, and gave them the harvest which He had appointed for them. A Psalmist of that day speaks of the strangeness of the deliverance to them. When the Lord turned again the**

¹ Ps. cxxxii. 11.

² Nabopolassar. See Abyden. in Eus. Chron. Arm. i. p. 54.

³ Ezra iv. 14, 15.

⁴ See instances in Rawlinson Herod. T. ii. p. 564.

⁵ Ezra i. 3.

⁴ Th. 19, 20.

¹ Ps. cxxvi. 1, 5.

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CHAPTER VII.

1 *A reproof of manifold sins. 11*
God's wrath against them for
their hypocrisy.

WHEN I would have
healed Israel, then the
iniquity of Ephraim was

captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. And primarily of that *bringing back the captivity of His people*, he uses Hosea's image of the harvest. *They which sow in tears shall reap in joy.* To the eye of the politician, it was an overthrow of empires and convulsion of the world, the herald of further convulsions, by which the new-established empire was in its turn overthrown. In the real, the religious, history of mankind, of far greater moment were those fifty thousand souls, to whom, with Zorobabel of the line of David, Cyrus gave leave to return. In them he fulfilled prophecy, and prepared for that further fulfillment, after his own empire had been long dissolved, and when, from the line of Zorobabel, was that Birth which was promised in Bethlehem of Judah.

VII. 1. *When I would have healed Israel.* God begins anew by appealing to Israel, that all which He had done to heal them, had but served to make their sin more evident, and that, from highest to lowest, as to all manners and ways of sin. When the flash of God's light on the sinner's conscience enlightens it not, it only discloses its darkness. The name *Israel* includes the whole people; the names, Ephraim and Samaria, probably are meant to designate the chief among them, Ephraim having been their royal tribe, and being the chief tribe among them; Samaria being their royal city. The sins, which Hosea denounces in this chapter, are chiefly the sins of the great, which, from them, had spread among the people. Whatever healing methods God had used, whether through the teaching of the prophets or through His own fatherly chastisements, they "would not hearken nor be amended, but ran on still more obstinately in their evil courses. The disease prevailed against the remedy, and was irritated by it, so that the remedy served only to lay open the extent of its malignity, and to shew that there was worse in it, than did at first appear." So S. Paul says of all human nature. "When the commandment came, sin revived, the knowledge of good only enhances evil." "So, when God, made Man, present and visible, willed to heal Israel, then that iniquity of the Jews and wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees was discovered, whereof this iniquity of Ephraim and wickedness of Sa-

¹ Pcc.

² Rom. vii. 3.

³ Rup.

discovered, and the † wickedness of Samaria: for *they commit falsehood; and the † thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers † spoileth without.

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† Heb. evils.
ch. 5. 1. & 6.
10.

† Heb. strip-
peth.

maria was a type. For an evil spirit goaded them to mock, persecute, blaspheme the Teacher of repentance Who, together with the word of preaching, did works, such as none other man did. For Christ pleased them not, a Teacher of repentance, persuading to poverty, a Pattern of humility, a Guide to meekness, a Monitor to mourn for sins, a Proclaimer of righteousness, a Requirer of mercy, a Praiser of purity of heart, a Rewarder of peace, a Consoler of those who suffered persecution for righteousness' sake. Why did they reject, hate, persecute, Him Who taught thus? Because they loved all contrary thereto, and wished for a Messiah, who should exalt them in this world, and disturb the peace of nations, until he should by war subdue to their empire all the rest of the world, build for them on earth a Jerusalem of gold and gems, and fulfill their covetousness in all things of this sort. Their mind He once briefly expressed; "How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only? They persecuted Him then Who willed to heal them, as madmen strike the physician offering them medicine, nor did they cease, until they required Him their King to be crucified. Thus was the iniquity of Ephraim and wickedness of Samaria discovered, yet filled up by them; and so they filled up the measure of their fathers, and discovered and testified, that they were of the same mind with their fathers.—In all these things they committed falsehood, lying against their King Whom they denied, and accused as seditious."

For they [i. e. all of them] commit falsehood. Falsehood was the whole habit and tissue of their lives. "They dealt falsely in all their doings both with God and man, being hypocritical and false in all their words and doings, given to fraud and deceit, from the highest to the lowest." Night and day; in silence and in open violence; *within*, where all seemed guarded and secure, and *without*, in open defiance of law and public justice; these deeds of wrong went on in an unceasing round. In the night, the thief cometh in, breaking into men's houses and pillaging secretly; a troop of robbers spoileth without, spreading their ravages far and wide, and desolating without resistance. It was all one state of anarchy, violence, and disorganization.

⁴ S. John v. 24.

⁵ Pcc.

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2 And they † consider
not in their hearts that I

† Heb. say not
to.

‡ Jer. 17. 1.

• Ps. 9. 16.

Prov. 5. 22.

remember all their wickedness: now • their own

doings have beset them
about; they are † before my
face.

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† Ps. 90. 8.

3 They make the king

2. And they consider not in their hearts, lit. (as in the E. M.) they say not to their hearts. The conscience is God's voice to the heart from within; man's knowledge of the law of God, and his memory of it, is man's voice, reminding his heart and rebellious affections to abide in their obedience to God. God speaks through the heart, when by His secret inspirations He recalls it to its duty. Man speaks to his own heart, when he checks its sinful or passionate impulses by the rule of God's law, *Thou shalt not*. "At first, men feel the deformity of certain sorts of wickedness. When accustomed to them, men think that God is indifferent to what no longer shocks themselves." They say not to their heart any more, that God remembers them.

I remember all their wickedness. This was the root of all their wickedness, want of thought. They would not stop to say to themselves, that God not only saw, but remembered their wickedness, and not only this, but that He remembered it all. Many will acknowledge that God sees them. He sees all things, and so them also. This is a part of His natural attribute of omniscience. It costs them nothing to own it. But what God remembers, that He will repay. This belongs to God's attributes, as the moral Governor of the world; and this, man would gladly forget. But in vain. God does remember, and remembers in order to punish. Now, at the very moment when man would not recall this to his own heart, *their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face*. Unless or until man repent, God sees man continually, encompassed by all his past evil deeds; they surround him, accompany him, whithersoever he goeth; they attend him, like a band of followers; they lie down with him, they await him at his awakening; they live with him, but they do not die with him; they encircle him, that he should in no wise escape them, until he come attended by them, as witnesses against him, at the judgment-seat of God. *His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins*. God remembers all their wickedness. Then He will requite all; not the last sins only, but all. So when Moses interceded for his people after the sin of the calf, God says to him, *go lead the people unto the place, of which I have spoken unto thee; behold My Angel shall go before thee; nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon*

them; and of the sins of Israel and their enemies; *Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures? to Me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time*. The sins, forgotten by man, are remembered by God, and are requited all together in the end. A slight image of the Day of Judgment, the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, against which the hard and impenitent heart treasures up unto itself wrath!

They are before My face. All things, past, present, and to come, are present before God. He sees all things which have been, or which are, or which shall be, or which could be, although He shall never will that they should be, in one eternal, unvarying, present. To what end then for man to cherish an idle hope, that God will not remember, what He is ever seeing? In vain wouldst thou think, that the manifold ways of man are too small, too intricate, too countless, to be remembered by God. God says, *They are before My Face*.

3. They make the king glad with their wickedness. Wicked sovereigns and a wicked people are a curse to each other, each encouraging the other in sin. Their king, being wicked, had pleasure in their wickedness; and they, seeing him to be pleased by it, set themselves the more, to do what was evil, and to amuse him with accounts of their sins. Sin is in itself so shameful, that even the great cannot, by themselves, sustain themselves in it, without others to flatter them. A good and serious man is a reproach to them. And so, the sinful great corrupt others, both as aiding them in their debaucheries, and in order not to be reproached by their virtues, and because the sinner has a corrupt pleasure and excitement in hearing of tales of sin, as the good joy to hear of good. Whence S. Paul says, *who, knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*.

But whereas, they all, kings, princes, and people, thus agreed and conspired in sin, and the sin of the great is the most destructive, the prophet here upbraids the people most for this common sin, apparently because they were free from the greater temptations of the great, and so their sin was the more wilful. "An unhappy complaisance was the ruling character of Israel. It preferred its kings to God. Conscience was versatile, ac-

1 Prov. v. 22.

2 Ex. xxxii. 34.

3 Deut. xxxii. 34. 5.

4 Rom. i. 32.

Before CHRIST
cir. 780. glad with their wickedness,
and the princes * with their
lies.
• Rom. 1. 32. 4 'They are all adulter-
ers, as an oven heated by
the baker, || who ceaseth
|| from raising after he hath
kneaded the dough, until
it be leavened.
! Or, the raiser
will cease.
! Or, from
waking.

Before CHRIST
cir. 780. 5 In the day of our king
the princes have made him
sick || with bottles of wine; | Or, with heat
he stretched out his hand through wine.
with scorners.

6 For they have || made | Or, applied.
ready their heart like an
oven, whiles they lie in
wait: their baker sleepeth

commodating. Whatever was authorized by those in power, was approved." Ahab added the worship of Baal to that of the calves; Jehu confined himself to the sin of Jeroboam. The people acquiesced in the legalized sin. Much as if now, marriages, which by God's law are incest, or remarriages of the divorced, which our Lord pronounces adultery, were to be held allowable, because man's law ceases to annex any penalty to them.

4. *They are all adulterers.* The Prophet continues to picture the corruption of all kinds and degrees of men. *All of them, king, princes, people; all were given to adultery, both spiritual, in departing from God, and actual, (for both sorts of sins went together,) in defiling themselves and others. All of them were, (so the word¹ means,) habitual adulterers.* One only pause there was in their sin, the preparation to complete it. He likens their hearts, inflamed with lawless lusts, to the heat of an oven which the baker had already heated. The unusual construction "burning from the baker"² instead of "heated by the baker" may have been chosen, in order to express, how the fire continued to burn of itself, as it were, (although at first kindled by the baker,) and was ever ready to burn whatever was brought to it, and even now was all red-hot, burning on continually; and Sutan, who had stirred it, gave it just this respite, *from the time when he had kneaded the dough*³, until the leaven, which he had put into it, had fully worked, and the whole was ready for the operation of the fire.

The world is full of such men now, ever on fire, and pausing only from sin, until the flatteries, whereby they seduce the unstable, have worked and penetrated the whole mind, and victim after victim is gradually leavened and prepared for sin.

5. *In the day of our king, the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine* [or, with heat from wine.] Their holidays, like those of so many Englishmen now, were days of excess. The day of their king was probably some civil festival; his birthday, or his coronation-day.

The Prophet owns the king, in that he calls him *our king*; he does not blame them for keeping the day, but for the way in which they kept it. Their festival they turned into an irreligious and anti-religious carousal; making themselves like the brutes which perish, and tempting their king first to forget his royal dignity, and then to blaspheme the majesty of God.

He stretched out his hand with scorners, as it is said⁴, *Wine is a mocker (or scoffer)*. Drunkenness, by taking off all power of self-restraint, brings out the evil which is in the man. The *scorner* or *scoffer* is one who *neither fears God nor regards man*⁵, but makes a jest of all things, true and good, human or divine. Such were these corrupt princes of the king of Israel; with these *he stretched out the hand*, in token of his good fellowship with them, and that he was one with them. He withdrew his hand or his society from good and sober men, and *stretched it out*, not to punish these, but to join with them, as men in drink reach out their hands to any whom they meet, in token of their sottish would-be friendliness. With these the king drank, jested, played the buffoon, praised his idols, scoffed at God. The flattery of the bad is a man's worst foe.

6. *For they have made ready their heart like an oven.* He gives the reason of their bursting out into open mischief; it was ever stored up within. *They made ready*, (lit. brought near) *their heart*. Their heart was ever brought nigh to sin, even while the occasion was removed at a distance from it. "The oven is their heart; the fuel, their corrupt affections, and inclinations, and evil concupiscence, with which it is filled; *their baker*, their own evil will and imagination, which stirs up whatever is evil in them." The Prophet then pictures how, while they seem for a while to rest from sin, it is but *whilst they lie in wait*; still, all the while, they made and kept their hearts ready, full of fire for sin and passion; any breathing-time from actual sin was no real rest; the heart was still all on fire; in the

¹ מְנַאֲפִים

² כְּעֶרֶה כְּאֹפֶן

³ The E. V. who ceaseth from raising, and the E. M. the raiser will cease, mean the same thing.

⁴ Prov. xx. 1. The word is the same, לִיץ or לוֹצֵץ.

⁵ S. Luke xviii. 4.

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all the night; in the morn-
ing it burneth as a flaming
fire.

Fulfilled 772.

7 They are all hot as an
oven, and have devoured

morning, right early, as soon as the occasion
came, it burst forth.

The same truth is seen where the tempter
is without. Such, whether Satan or his
agents, having lodged the evil thought or
desire in the soul, often feign themselves
asleep, as it were, "letting the fire and the
fuel which they had inserted, work together,"
that so the fire pent-in might kindle more
thoroughly and fatally, and the heart being
filled and penetrated with it, might burst
out of itself, as soon as the occasion should
come.

7. *They are all hot as an oven, and have
devoured their judges.* Plans of sin, sooner or
later, through God's overruling Providence,
bound back upon their authors. The wisdom
of God's justice and of His government shews
itself the more, in that, without any apparent
agency of His own, the sin is guided by Him,
through all the intricate mazes of human
passion, malice, and cunning, back to the
sinner's bosom. Jeroboam, and the kings
who followed him, had corrupted the people,
in order to establish their own kingdom.
They had heated and inflamed the people,
and had done their work completely, for the
Prophet says, *They are all hot as an oven*;
none had escaped the contagion; and they,
thus heated, burst forth and, like the furnace
of Nebchadnezzar, devoured not only what
was cast into it, but those who kindled it.
The heathen observed, that the "artificers of
death perished by their own art."

Probably the Prophet is describing a scene
of revelry, debauchery, and scoffing, which
preceded the murder of the unhappy Zecha-
riah; and so fills up the brief history of the
Book of Kings. He describes a profligate
court and a debauched king; and him doubt-
less, Zechariah¹; those around him, delight-
ing him with their wickedness; all of them
habitual adulterers; but one secret agent
stirring them up, firing them with sin, and
resting only, until the evil heaven had worked
through and through. Then follows the revel,
and the ground why they intoxicated the king,
viz. their lying-in-wait. "For," he adds, "they
prepared their hearts like a furnace, when
they lie in wait." The mention of dates, of
facts, and of the connection of these together;
"the day of our king;" his behavior: their

their judges;² all their kings

² are fallen: *'there is none*

among them that calleth

unto me.

8 Ephraim, he ³hath

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sch. s. 4.
² 2 Kgs 15, 10,
14, 23, 30.
¹ Is. 64. 7.
³ Ps. 106. 35.

lying in wait; the secret working of one
individual; the bursting out of the fire in
the morning; the falling of their kings;
looks, as if he were relating an actual history.
We know that Zechariah, of whom he is
speaking, was slain through conspiracy pub-
licly in the open face of day, "before all the
people," no one heeding, no one resisting.
Hosea seems to supply the moral aspect of
the history, how Zechariah fell into this
general contempt; how, in him, all which
was good in the house of Jehu expired.

All their kings are fallen. The kingdom of
Israel, having been set up in sin, was,
throughout its whole course, unstable and
unsettled. Jeroboam's house ended in his
son; that of Baasha, who killed Jeroboam's
son, Nadab, ended in his own son, Elah;
Omri's ended in his son's son, God having
delayed the punishment on Ahab's sins for one
generation, on account of his partial repen-
tance; then followed Jehu's, to whose house
God, for his obedience in some things, con-
tinued the kingdom to the fourth generation.
With these two exceptions, in the houses of
Omri and Jehu, the kings of Israel either
left no sons, or left them to be slain. Nadab,
Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, Zechariah,
Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah, were put to death
by those who succeeded them. Of all the
kings of Israel, Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri,
Menahem, alone, in addition to Jehu and the
three next of his house, died natural
deaths. So was it written by God's hand on
the house of Israel, *all their kings have fallen*.
The captivity was the tenth change after
they had deserted the house of David. Yet
such was the stupidity and obstinacy both of
kings and people, that, amid all these chas-
tisements, none, either people or king, turned
to God and prayed Him to deliver them.
Not even distress, amid which almost all
betake themselves to God, awakened any
sense of religion in them. *There is none among
them, that calleth unto Me.*

8. *Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the
people; i.e. with the heathen; he mixed or
mingled himself among or with them, so as to
corrupt himself², as it is said³, they were mingled
among the heathen and learned their works.*
God had forbidden all intermarriage with the
heathen⁴, lest His people should corrupt

origin of the name Babel, Gen. xi. 7,) or contamina-
tion, (as in בלל.)

² Ps. cvi. 35

⁴ Ex. xxxiv. 12-16.

¹ See Intro. p. 5.

² The word בלל is used not of mingling only, but
of a mingling which involved confusion, (as in the

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mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

¹ ch. 8. 7.

9 'Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are † here and

† Heb.
sprinkled.

themselves: they thought themselves wiser than He, intermarried, and were corrupted. Such are the ways of those who put themselves amid occasions of sin.

Ephraim is (lit. *is become*) a cake (lit. *on the coals*) not turned. The Prophet continues the image.¹ *Ephraim* had been mingled, steeped, kneaded up into one, as it were, with the heathen, their ways, their idolatries, their vices. God would amend them, and they, withholding themselves from His discipline, and not yielding themselves wholly to it, were but spoiled. The sort of cake, to which Ephraim is here likened, *uggah*², lit. *circular*, was a thin pancake, to which a scorching heat was applied on one side; sometimes by means of hot charcoal heaped upon it; sometimes, (it is thought,) the fire was within the earthen jar, around which the thin dough was fitted. If it remained long unturned, it was burnt on the one side; while it continued unbaked, doughy, reeking, on the other; the fire spoiling, not penetrating it through. Such were the people; such are too many so-called Christians; they united in themselves hypocrisy and ungodliness, outward performance and inward lukewarmness; the one overdone, but without any wholesome effect on the other. The one was scorched and black; the other, steamed, damp, and lukewarm; the whole worthless, spoiled irremediably, fit only to be cast away. The fire of God's judgment, with which the people should have been amended, made but an outward impression upon them, and reached not within, nor to any thorough change, so that they were the more hopelessly spoiled through the means which God used for their amendment.

9. *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not.* Like Samson, when, for sensual pleasure, he had betrayed the source of his strength and God had departed from him, Israel knew not how or wherein his alliances with the heathen had impaired his strength. He thought his losses at the hand of the enemy, passing wounds, which time would heal; he thought not of them, as tokens of God's separation from him, that his time of trial was coming to its close, his strength

there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

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10 And the^m pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and^a they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this.

^m ch. 5. 5.

^a Is. 9. 13.

decaying, his end at hand. Israel was not only incorrigible, but *past feeling*³, as the Apostle says of the heathen. The marks of wasting and decay were visible to sight and touch; yet he himself perceived not what all saw except himself. Israel had sought to strangers for help, and it had turned to his decay. Pul and Tiglath-pileser had *devoured his strength*, despoiling him of his wealth and treasure, the flower of his men, and the produce of his land, draining him of his riches, and hardly oppressing him through the tribute imposed upon him. But "like men quite stupefied, they, though thus continually gnawed upon, yet suffered themselves willingly to be devoured, and seemed insensible of it." Yet not only so, but the present evils were the forerunners of worse. Grey hairs, themselves the effects of declining age and tokens of decay, are the forerunners of death. "4 Thy grey hairs are thy passing-bell," says the proverb.

The Prophet repeats, after each clause, *he knoweth not*. He knoweth nothing; he knoweth not the tokens of decay in himself, but hides them from himself; he knoweth not God, Who is the Author of them; he knoweth not the cause of them, his sins; he knoweth not the end and object of them, his conversion; he knoweth not, what, since he knoweth not any of these things, will be the issue of them, his destruction. Men hide from themselves the tokens of decay, whether of body or soul. And so death, whether of body or soul or both, comes upon them unawares. "5 Looking on the surface, he imagines that all things are right with him, not feeling the secret worm which gnaws within. The outward garb remains; the rules of fasting are observed; the stated times of prayer are kept; but the heart is far from Me, saith the Lord. Consider diligently what thou lovest, what thou fearest, whereat thou rejoicest or art saddened, and thou wilt find, under the habit of religion, a worldly mind; under the rags of conversion, a heart of perversion."

10. *And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face.* His pride convicted him. All the afflictions of

¹ The word, *hath mingled*, includes also doubtless the meaning of *kneaded up with*, כבולל, as in Lev. ii. 4, 5, &c.

² עגג.

³ Eph. iv. 19.
⁴ lit. "Thy grey hairs are the proclaimer of thy death," an Arabic proverb.

⁵ 8. Bern. Sermon. 2. in cap. jej. § 2, 3.

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* ch. 11. 11.
* See 2 Kings
15. 19. & 17. 4.
ch. 5. 13. &
3. & 12. 1.

11. ¶ Ephraim also is
like a silly dove without
heart: ¹ they call to Egypt,
2. they go to Assyria.

God humbled him not; yea, they but brought out his pride, which ¹ kept him from acknowledging and repenting of the sins which had brought those evils upon him, and from turning to God and seeking to Him for remedy." Men complain of their "fortune" or "fate" or "stars," and go on the more obstinately, to build up what God destroys, to prop up by human means or human aid what, by God's Providence, is failing; they venture more desperately, in order to recover past losses, until the crash at last becomes hopeless and final.

Nor seek Him for all this. God had exhausted all the treasures of His severity, as, before, of His love. He Himself marvels at His incorrigible and contumacious servant, as He says in Isaiah ², *Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. How is this? It follows, because they have no heart.*

11. Ephraim is [become] like a silly dove. "There is nothing more simple than a dove," says the Eastern proverb. Simplicity is good or bad, not in itself, but according to some other qualities of the soul, good or evil, with which it is united, to which it opens the mind, and which lead it to good or mislead it to evil. The word ³ describes one, easily persuaded, open, and so, one who takes God's word simply, obeys His Will, without refinement or subtlety or explaining it away; in which way it is said ⁴, *The Lord preserveth the simple*; or, on the other hand, one who lets himself easily be led to evil, as the heathen said of youth, that they were "like wax to be bent to evil." In this way, it is said ⁵, *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?* Our Lord uses this likeness of the dove, for good ⁶, *be wise as serpents, simple, or harmless as doves.* Hosea speaks of simplicity without wisdom; for he adds, *a silly dove without understanding, (lit. without a heart),* whereby they should love God's Will, and so should understand it. Ephraim become, he says, like a silly dove. Neglecting God's calls, unmoved by calamity or sufferings, and not seeking to God for all this which He has done to recall them, they grew in folly. Man is ever growing in wisdom or in folly, in grace or in gracelessness. This new stage of folly lay in their flying to Assyria, to help them, in fact, against God; as it follows,

They call to Egypt. Instead of calling to God Who could and would help, they called to Egypt who could not, and went to Assyria who

¹ Psa. 81. 5. ² פתח. ³ Ps. cxvi. 1. ⁴ Prov. i. 22.

12 When they shall go,
¹ I will spread my net upon
them; I will bring them
down as the fowls of the

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* Ezek. 12. 13.

would not. So God complains by Isaiah ⁷, *To Me, thou hast not called, O Jacob.* This was their folly; they called not to God, Who had delivered them out of Egypt, but, alternately, to their two powerful neighbors, of whom Egypt was a delusive promiser, not failing only, but piercing, those who leant on it; Assyria was a powerful oppressor. Yet what else is almost the whole history of Christian states? The "balance of power," which has been the pride of the later policy of Europe, which has been idolized as a god, to which statesmen have looked, as a deliverance out of all their troubles; as if it were a sort of Divine Providence, regulating the affairs of men, and dispensing with the interference of God; what is it but the self-same wisdom, which balanced Egypt against Assyria?

12. When they go, (lit. according as they go, in all circumstances of time or place or manner, when whithersoever or howsoever they shall go), *I will spread My net upon them*, so as to surround and envelop them on all sides and hold them down. The dove soaring aloft, with speed like the storm-wind ⁸, is a picture of freedom, independence, impetuous, unhindered, following on its own course; weak and timid, it trusts in the skillfulness with which it guides its flight, to escape pursuit; the net, with its thin slight meshes, betokens how weak instruments become all-sufficient in the hands of the Almighty; the same dove, brought down from its almost viewless height, fluttering weakly, helplessly and hopelessly, under those same meshes, is a picture of that same self-dependent spirit humiliated, overwhelmed by inevitable evils, against which it impotently struggles, from which it seems to see its escape, but by which it is held as fast, as if it lay motionless in iron.

As their congregation hath heard. Manifolddly had the message of reward on obedience, and of punishment on disobedience, come to Israel. It was spread throughout the law; it fills the book of Deuteronomy; it was concentrated in the blessing and the curse on mount Ebal and Gerizim; it was put into their mouths in the song of Moses; it was inculcated by all the prophets who had already prophesied to them, and now it was being enforced on that generation by Hosea himself. Other kingdoms have fallen; but their fall, apart from Scripture, has not been the subject of prophecy. Their ruin has come

⁵ S. Matt. x. 16. ⁷ Isai. xliiii. 22. ⁸ Ps. lv. 6-8.

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heaven; I will chastise them, 'as their congregation hath heard.

* Lev. 26. 14, &c.
Deut. 28. 15,
&c. 2 Kings 17.
13; 18.

† Heb. *spoil*.

13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: † destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though

* I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

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* Mic. 6. 4.

* Job 37. 9, 10.
Ps. 78. 36,
Jer. 3. 10.
Zech. 7. 5.

14 'And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn

mostly unexpected, either by themselves or others.

13. *Woe unto them, for they have fled from Me.* The threatening rises in severity, as did the measure of their sin. Whereas ¹ *Salvation belonged to God alone, and they only ² abide under His shadow, who make Him their refuge, woe must needs come on them, who leave Him.* ³ *They forsake their own mercy.* Woe they draw upon themselves, who forget God; how much more then they, who wilfully and with a high hand transgress against Him! *Destruction unto them, for they have transgressed against Me.* To be separated from God is the source of all evils; it is the "pain of loss" of God's Presence, in hell; but *destruction* is more than this; it is everlasting death.

And I have redeemed them and they have spoken lies against Me. The I and they are both emphatic in Hebrew; ⁴ "I redeemed;" "they spoke lies." Such is man's requital of His God. Oft as He redeemed, so often did they traduce Him. Such was the history of the passage through the wilderness; such, of the period under the Judges; such had it been recently, when God delivered Israel by the hand of Jeroboam II⁵. The word, *I have redeemed*, denotes "habitual oft-renewed deliverance," "that He was their constant Redeemer, from Whom they had found help, did still find it, and might yet look to find it, if they did not, by their ill behavior, stop the course of His favor towards them⁶." God's mercy overflowed their ingratitude. *They had spoken lies against Him, often as He had delivered them; He was still their abiding Redeemer. I do redeem them.*

They have spoken lies against Me. Men speak lies against God, in their hearts, their words, their deeds, whenever they harbor thoughts, speak words, or act, so as to deny that God is what He is, or as to imply that He is not what He has declared Himself to be. Whoever seeks anything out of God or against His Will; whoever seeks from man, or from idols, or from fortune, or from his own powers, what God alone bestows; whoever

acts as if God was not a good God, ready to receive the penitent, or a just God Who will avenge the holiness of His laws and not clear the guilty, does in fact, *speak lies against God.* People, day by day, *spoke lies against God*, against His Wisdom, His Providence, His Justice, His Goodness, His Omniscience, when they are thinking of nothing less. Jeroboam spoke lies against God, when he said, *these be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt*, whereas God had so often enforced upon them ⁷ *the Lord redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt*; ⁸ *the Lord thy God brought thee out thence with a mighty hand, and stretched out arm.* Israel spoke lies against God, when he said ⁹ *these are my rewards which my lovers have given me, or when, they returned not to Him but called on Egypt*, as though God would not help them, Who said that He would, or as though Egypt could help them, of whom God said that it should not. Sometimes, they spoke out lies boldly, telling God's true prophets that He had not sent them, or forbidding them to speak in His Name; sometimes covertly, as when they turned to God, not sincerely but feignedly; but always perversely. And when God the Son came on earth to *redeem them*, then still more, they spoke lies against Him, all His life long, saying, *He deceiveth the people*, and all their other blasphemies, and ¹⁰ when He forgave them the sin of His death, saying, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*, they persevered in *speaking lies* against Him, and bribed the soldiers to speak lies against Him, and themselves do so to this day.

14. *And they have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds*, or, in the present time, *they cry not unto Me when they howl.* They did cry, and, it may be, they cried even unto God. At least, the prophet does not deny that they cried to God at all; only, he says, that they did not cry to Him with their heart. Their cries were wrung from them by their temporal distresses, and ended in them, not in God. There was no sincerity in their hearts, no change in their doings.

¹ Ps. iii. 8.

² Jon. ii. 8.

ואנכי אפרם ויהיה רכריכי

³ 2 Kings xiv. 25-27.

⁴ Ib. xci. 1, 2.

* Poc.

⁷ Ex. xx. 2. Lev. xix. 36. xxiii. 43. Num. xv. 41.

Deut. v. 6, 15.

⁸ Deut. vii. 8; add. xlii. 5. xv. 15. xxiv. 18.

⁹ ch. ii. 12.

¹⁰ Rup.

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and wine, *and* they rebel
against me.

Or, *chastened*.

15 Though I || have
bound *and* strengthened
their arms, yet do they im-
agine mischief against me.

* ch. 11. 7.

16 * They return, *but* not

Their cry was a mere *howling*. The secret complaint of the heart is a loud cry in the ears of God. The impetuous cry of impatient and unconverted suffering is a mere brutish *howling*. Their heart was set wholly on their earthly wants; it did not thank God for giving them good things, nor cry to Him truly when He withheld them.

But, it may be, that the Prophet means also to contrast the acts of the ungodly, private and public, amid distress, with those of the godly. The godly man implores God in public and in private. The prayer on the bed, expresses the private prayer of the soul to God, when, the world being shut out, it is alone with Him. In place of this, there was the *howling*, as men toss fretfully and angrily on their beds, roar for pain; but, instead of complaining to God, complain of Him, and are angry, not with themselves, but with God. In place of the public prayer and humiliation, there was a mere tumultuous assembly, in which they clamored for corn and wine, and rebelled against God. *They assemble themselves*; (lit. *they* ¹ *gather themselves tumultuously together*). *They rebel against Me*; (lit. *they turn aside against Me*). They did not only (as it is expressed elsewhere) "turn aside from God." *They turn aside against Me*; He says, flying, as it were, in the very face of God. This tumultuous assembly was either some stormy civil debate, how to obtain the corn and wine which God withheld, or a tumultuous clamoring to their idols and false gods, like that of the priests of Baal, when arrayed against Elijah on Mount Carmel; whereby they removed the further from God's law, and rebelled with a high hand against Him.

"What is to cry to the Lord, but to long for the Lord? But if any one multiply prayers, crying and weeping as he may, yet not with any intent to gain God Himself, but to obtain some earthly or passing thing, he cannot truly be said to cry unto the Lord, i. e. so to cry that his cry should come to the hearing of the Lord. This is a cry like Esau's, who sought no other fruit from his father's blessing, save to be rich and

to the most High: * they
are like a deceitful bow:

their princes shall fall by
the sword for the 'rage of
their tongue: this *shall be*
their derision * in the land
of Egypt.

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* Ps. 78. 57.

* Ps. 73. 9.

* ch. 9. 3, 6.

powerful in this world. When then He saith, *They cried not to Me in their heart, &c.*, He means, they were not devoted to Me, their heart was not right with Me; they sought not Myself, but things of Mine. They howled, desiring only things for the belly, and seeking not to have Me. Thus they belong not to the generation of those who seek the Lord, who seek the face of the God of Jacob⁶, but to the generation of Esau."

15. *Though I have bound*, rather, (as in the E. M.) *And I have chastened*⁵, *I have strengthened their arms, and they imagine mischief against Me*. God had tried all ways with them, but it was all one. He chastened them in love, and in love He strengthened them; He brought the enemy upon them, (as aforetime in the days of the Judges,) and He gave them strength to repel the enemy; as He raised up judges of old, and lately had fulfilled His promise which He had made to Joash through Elisha. But it was all in vain. Whatever God did, Israel was still the same. All only issued in further evil. The Prophet sums up in four words all God's varied methods for their recovery, and then sets over against them the one result, fresh rebellion on the part of His creatures and His people.

They imagine or devise mischief against Me. The order in the Hebrew is emphatic, and against Me they devise evil; i. e. against Me, Who had thus tried all the resources and methods of Divine wisdom to reclaim them, they devise evil. These are words of great condescension. For the creature can neither hurt nor profit the Creator. But since God vouchsafed to be their King, He deigned to look upon their rebellions, as so many efforts to injure Him. All God's creatures are made for His glory, and on earth, chiefly man; and among men, chiefly those whom He had chosen as His people. In that, then, they set themselves to diminish that glory, giving to idols⁶, they, as far as in them lay, *devised evil against Him*. Man would dethrone God, if he could.

16. *They return, but not to the most High*.

¹ נָוַר, when used of assembling, is always used of tumultuous assembling, as in Ps. lvi. 7. lix. 4. cxl. 3. Is. lvi. 15.

² This is in two words in Hebrew, נִסְּרוּ.

³ Rep.

⁴ Ps. xxiv. 8.

⁵ The two words *asar*, אָסַר, bound, and *issar*, יָסַר, chastened, differ but by a letter in the Hebrew. Yet one is never put for the other. The Heb. Comm., whom the E. V. followed, did but guess from the context.

⁶ See Is. xlii. 8.

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CHAPTER VIII.

1, 12 *Destruction is threatened for their impiety, 5 and idolatry.*

* ch. 5. 8.
† Heb. the roof
of thy mouth.

SET [†]the trumpet to [†]thy mouth. *He shall come*

God exhorts by Jeremiah¹, *If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto Me. They changed, whenever they did change, with a feigned, hypocritical conversion, but not to God, nor acknowledging His Majesty. Man, until truly converted, turns to and fro, unstably, hither and thither, changing from one evil to another, from the sins of youth to the sins of age, from the sins of prosperity to the sin of adversity; but he remains himself unchanged. He turns, not to the most High. The Prophet says this in three, as it were, broken words, They turn, ²not most High. The hearer readily filled up the broken sentence, which fell, drop by drop, from the Prophet's choked heart.*

They are like a deceitful bow, which, "howsoever the archer directs it, will not carry the arrow right home to the mark," but to other objects clean contrary to his will. "3 God had, as it were, bent Israel, as His own bow, against the tyranny of the devil and the deceit of idolatry. For Israel alone in the whole world cast aside the worship of idols, and was attached to the true and natural Lord of all things. But they turned themselves to the contrary. For, being bound to this, they fought against God for the glory of idols. They became then as a warped bow, shooting their arrows contrariwise." In like way doth every sinner act, using against God, in the service of Satan, God's gifts of nature or of outward means, talents, or wealth, or strength, or beauty, or power of speech. God gave all for His own glory; and man turns all aside to do honor and service to Satan.

Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue. The word, rendered ⁴rage, is everywhere else used of the wrath of God; here, of the wrath and foaming of man against God. Jeremiah relates how, the nearer their destruction came upon Judah, the more madly the politicians and false prophets contradicted what God revealed. Their tongue was a sharp sword. They sharpened their tongue like a sword; and the sword pierced their own bosom. The phrensy of their speech not only drew down God's anger, but was the instrument of their destruction. They misled the people; taught them to trust in Egypt, not in God; persuaded them to believe themselves, and to

⁵as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because

⁶they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

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⁷Deut. 28. 49.
⁸Jer. 4. 13.
⁹Hab. 1. 8.
¹⁰ch. 6. 7.

disbelieve God; to believe, that the enemy should depart from them and not carry them away captive. They worked up the people to their will, and so they secured their own destruction. The princes of Judah were especially judged and put to death by Nebuchadnezzar⁵. The like probably took place in Israel. In any case, those chief in power are chief objects of destruction. Still more did these words come true before the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. They were maddened by their own curse, the rage of their tongue against their Redeemer, *His blood be on us and on our children.* Phrensy became their characteristic. It was the amazement of the Romans, and their own destruction.

This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt. This, i. e. all this, their boasting of Egypt, their failure, their destruction, shall become their derision. In Egypt had they trusted; to Egypt had they gone for succor; in Egypt should they be derided. Such is the way of man. The world derides those who trusted in it, sued it, courted it, served it, preferred it to their God. Such are the wages, which it gives. So Isaiah prophesied of Judah⁶, the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame and also a reproach.

VIII. 1. *The trumpet to thy mouth!* So God bids the prophet Isaiah⁷, *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet. The prophets, as watchmen, were set by God to give notice of His coming judgments⁸. As the sound of a war-trumpet would startle a sleeping people, so would God have the Prophet's warning burst upon their sleep of sin. The ministers of the Church are called to be "watchmen⁹". "They too are forbidden to keep a cowardly silence, when the house of the Lord is imperilled by the breach of the covenant or violation of the law. If fear of the wicked or false respect for the great silences the voice of those whose office it is to cry aloud, how shall such cowardice be excused?"*

He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord. The words "he shall come" are inserted for clearness. The Prophet beholds the enemy speeding with the swiftness of an eagle, as it darts down upon its prey. The

¹ ch. iv. 1.
² S. Cyr.

שׁוֹבוּ לַאֲדֹנָי.
³ Jer. III. 10. ⁴ xxx. 3, 5.

⁷ ch. lviii. 1.

⁸ Ezek. xxxiii. 3, Am. iii. 6.

⁹ Service for Ordering Priests.

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2 ^a Israel shall cry unto
me, My God, ^a we know
thee.

^a Ps. 78. 34.
ch. 5. 15.
• Tit. 1. 16.

3 Israel hath cast off the

house of the Lord is, most strictly, the Temple, as being the place which God had chosen to place His name there. Next, it is used, of the kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem, among whom the Temple was; whence God says, *I have forsaken My house, I have left Mine heritage; I have given the dearly-beloved of My soul into the hands of her enemies, and I, What hath My beloved to do in Mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many?* Yet the title of God's house is older than the Temple; for God Himself uses it of His whole people, saying of Moses, *My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house.* And even the ten tribes, separated as they were from the Temple-worship, and apostates from the true faith of God, were not, as yet, counted by Him as wholly excluded from the house of God. For God, below, threatens that removal, as something still to come; for the wickedness of their doings *I will drive them out of My house*. The eagle, then coming down against or upon the house of the Lord, is primarily Shalmaneser, who came down and carried off the ten tribes. Yet since Hosea, in these prophecies, includes Judah, also, the house of the Lord is most probably to be taken in its fullest sense, as including the whole people of God, among whom He dwelt, and the Temple where His name was placed. The eagle includes then Nebuchadnezzar also, whom other prophets so call; and (since, all through, the principle of sin is the same and the punishment the same) it includes the Roman eagle, the ensign of their armies.

Because they have transgressed My covenant. "God, Whose justice is always unquestionable, useth to make clear to men its reasonableness." Israel had broken the covenant which God had made with their fathers, that He would be to them a God, and they to Him a people. The covenant they had broken chiefly by idolatry and apostacy; the law, by sins against their neighbor. In both ways they had rejected God; therefore God rejected them.

2. Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know Thee. Or, according to the order in the Hebrew, *To Me shall they cry, we know Thee, Israel, i. e. we, Israel, Thy people, know Thee.* It is the same plea which our Lord says that He shall reject in the Day of Judgment. *Many shall say unto Me, in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and*

¹ Jer. xii. 7.

² Num. xii. 7.

³ Ezek. xvi. 3, 12. Jer. xlviii. 40. Hab. i. 8.

⁴ Ib. xi. 15.

⁵ ch. ix. 15.

thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him.

Before
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cir. 700.

4 'They have set up kings, but not by me: they

² Kings 15. 13, 17, 25.
Shallum,
Menaheem,
Pekahiah.

in Thy Name cast out devils, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works. In like way, when our Lord came in the flesh, they said of God the Father, *He is our God.* But our Lord appealed to their own consciences; *It is My Father Who honoreth Me, of Whom ye say, He is our God, but ye have not known Him.* So Isaiah, when speaking of his own times, prophesied of those of our Lord also; *This people draweth nigh unto Me, with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.* "God says, that they shall urge this as a proof, that they know God, and as an argument to move God to have respect unto them, viz. that they are the seed of Jacob, who was called Israel, because he prevailed with God, and they were called by his name." As though they said, *"we, Thy Israel, know thee."* It was all hypocrisy, the cry of mere fear, not of love; whence God, using their own name of Israel which they had pleaded, answers the plea, declaring what Israel had become.

3. Israel has cast off the thing that is good, or (since the word means "to cast off with abhorrence") *Israel hath cast off and abhorred Good*, both "Him who is Good" and "that which is good." The word *to* includes both. They rejected good in rejecting God, "Who is simply, supremely, wholly, universally good, and good to all, the Author and Fountain of all good, so that there is nothing simply good but God; nothing worthy of that title, except in respect of its relation to Him Who is good and doing good." So then whatsoever any man hath or enjoys of good, is from his relation to Him, his nearness to Him, his congruity with Him. *The drawing near to God is good to me.* All that any man hath of good, is from his being near to God, and his being, as far as human condition is capable of, like unto Him. So that they who are far from Him, and put Him far from them, necessarily cast off all that is good."

The enemy shall pursue him. "Forsaking God, and forsaken by Him, they must needs be laid open to all evils." *The enemy, i. e. the Assyrian, shall pursue him.* This is according to the curse, denounced against them in the law, if they should forsake the Lord, and break His covenant, and not hearken to His voice to observe to do His commandments.

4. They have set up kings, but not by ME.

⁶ S. Matt. vii. 22.

⁷ S. Matt. xv. 8. Is. xxix. 13.

⁸ Ps. lxxiii. 28.

⁹ S. John viii. 54.

¹⁰ Poc. 10 Ps. cxix. 68.

¹¹ Deut. xxviii. 15-25.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 760. have made princes, and I
knew it not: * of their
* ch. 2. 8. & 13. 2. silver and their gold

Before
CHRIST
cir. 760. have they made them
idols, that they may be
cut off.

God Himself foretold to Jeroboam by Ahijah the prophet, that He would rend the kingdom out of the hands of Solomon, and give ten tribes to him, and would take him, and he should reign according to all that his soul desired and should be king over Israel¹; and, after the ten tribes had made Jeroboam king, God said by Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam and the two tribes², *Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me.*

Yet although here, as everywhere, man's self-will was overruled by God's Will, and fulfilled it, it was not the less self-will, both in the ten tribes and in Jeroboam. It was so in the ten tribes. For they cast off Rehoboam, simply of their own mind, because he would not lessen the taxes, as they prescribed. If he would have consented to their demands, they would have remained his subjects³. *They set up kings, but not by or through God, Whom they never consulted, nor asked His Will about the rules of the kingdom, or about its relation to the kingdom of Judah, or the house of David.* They referred these matters no more to God, than if there had been no God, or than if He interfered not in the affairs of man. It was self-will in Jeroboam himself, for he received the kingdom (which Ahijah told him, he desired) not from God, nor inquiring of him, how he should undertake it, nor anointed by Him, nor in any way acknowledging Him, but from the people. And as soon as he had received it, he set up rebellion against God, in order to establish his kingdom, which he founded in sin, whereby he made Israel to sin.

In like way, the Apostle says⁴, *against Thy holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.* Yet not the less did they sin in this Deicide; and the Blood of Jesus has ever since, as they imprecated on themselves, been on the Jews and on their children, as many as did not repent.

As was the beginning of the kingdom of Israel, such was its course. *They made kings, but not from God.* Such were all their kings, except Jehu and his house. During 253 years, for which the kingdom of Israel lasted, eighteen kings reigned over it, out of ten different families, and no family came to a close, save by a violent death. The like self-

will and independence closed the existence of the Jewish people. The Roman Emperor being afar off, the Scribes and Pharisees hoped, under him, without any great control, to maintain their own authority over the people. They themselves, by their God forbid! owned that our Lord truly saw their thoughts and purpose, *This is the heir; come let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours.* They willed to reign without Christ, feared the Heathen Emperor less than the holiness of Jesus, and in the words, *We have no king but Cæsar,* they deposed God, and shut themselves out from His kingdom.

And I knew it not. "As far as in them lay, they did it without His knowledge."⁵ They did not take Him into their counsels, nor desire His cognizance of it, or His approbation of it. If they could, they would have had Him ignorant of it, knowing it to be against His Will. And so in His turn, God knew it not, owned it not, as He shall say to the ungodly, *I know you not!*

Of their silver and their gold, have they made them idols. God had multiplied them, (as He said before⁶) and they ungratefully abused to the dishonor of the Giver, what He gave them to be used to His glory.

That they may be cut off, lit. *that he may be cut off.* The whole people is spoken of as one man, "one and all," as we say. It is a fearful description of obstinate sin, that their very object in it seemed to be their own destruction. They acted with one will as one man, who had, in all he did, this one end,—to perish. "As if on set purpose they would provoke destruction, and obstinately run themselves into it, although forewarned thereof." Holy Scripture speaks of that, as men's end, at which all their acts aim. "They see not, nor know, that they may be ashamed; i. e. they blind themselves, as though their whole object were, what they will bring upon themselves, their own shame." "They prophesy a lie in My Name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you." This was the ultimate end of those false prophecies. The false prophets of Judah filled them with false hopes; the real and true end of those prophecies, that in which they ended, was the ruin of those who uttered, and of those who listened to them. We ourselves say almost proverbially, "he goes the way to ruin himself;" not that such is the man's own object, but that he obstinately chooses a course of conduct, which,

¹ 1 Kings xl. 31, 37.
⁴ Acts iv. 27, 8.

² 2 K. xx. 4.
³ 1b. 4.
⁶ S. Luke xx. 16.

⁵ S. John viii. 54.
⁶ ch. ii. 8. ⁷ Pcc. ¹⁰ Is. xlii. 9. ¹¹ Jer. xxvii. 15.

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5 ¶ Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: ^a how long will it be

^a Jer. 13. 27.

others see, must end in utter ruin. So a man chooses destruction or hell, if he chooses those things which, according to God's known law and word, end in it. Man hides from his own eyes the distant future, and fixes them on the nearer objects which he has at heart. God lifts the veil, and discovers to him the further end, at which he is driving, which he is, in fact, compassing, and which is in truth the end; for his own fleeting objects perish in the using; this and this alone abides.

5. *Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off.* Israel had cast off God, his good. In turn, the Prophet says, the calf, which he had chosen to be his god instead of the Lord his God, *has cast him off.* He repeats the word, by which he had described Israel's sin, ¹ *Israel hath cast off and abhorred good*, in order to shew the connection of his sin and its punishment. "*Thy calf,*" whom thou madest for thyself, whom thou worshippest, whom thou lovest, of whom thou saidst², *Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; thy calf, in whom thou didst trust instead of thy God, it has requited thee the dishonor thou didst put on thy God; it hath cast thee off as a thing abhorred.* So it is with all men's idols, which they make to themselves, instead of God. First or last, they all fail a man, and leave him poor indeed. Beauty fades; wealth fails; honor is transferred to another; nothing abides, save God. Whence our own great poet of nature makes a fallen favorite say, "had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine-enemies."

Mine anger is kindled against them. Our passions are but some distorted likeness of what exists in God without passion; our anger, of His displeasure against sin. And so God speaks to us after the manner of men, and pictures His Divine displeasure under the likeness of our human passions of anger and fury, in order to bring home to us, what we wish to hide from ourselves, the severe and awful side of His Being, His Infinite Holiness, and the truth, that He will indeed avenge. He tells us, that He will surely punish; as men, who are extremely incensed, execute their displeasure if they can.

How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? lit. *how long will they not be able innocency?* So again it is said, *him that hath an high look and a proud heart, I cannot³; we supply, suffer.* *New moons and Sabbaths I*

¹ ver. 3. ¶ 1. ² 1 Kings xii. 28-31. ³ Ps. ci. 5.

ere they attain to innocency?

Before
CHRIST
cir. 760.

6 For from Israel was it also: the workman made

cannot⁴; our version adds, away with, i. e. endure. So here probably. As they had with abhorrence cast off God their good, so God says, *they cannot endure innocency*; but He speaks as wondering and aggrieved at their hardness of heart and their obdurate holding out against the goodness, which He desired for them. *How long will they not be able to endure innocency?* "What madness this, that when I give them place for repentance, they will not endure to return to health of soul!"

6. *For.* This verse may assign the reasons of God's displeasure, *mine anger is kindled*; or of Israel's impenitency, *How long will it be?* This indeed is only going a little further back; for Israel's incorrigibleness was the ground of God's displeasure. And they were incorrigible; because they had themselves devised it; *for from Israel was it also.* Those are especially incorrigible, who do not fall into error through ignorance, but who through malice devise it out of their own heart. Such persons act and speak, not as seduced by others, but seducing themselves, and condemned by their own judgment. Such were Israel and Jeroboam his king, who were not induced or seduced by others to deem the golden calf to be God, but devised it, of malicious intent, knowing that it was not God. Hence Israel could be cured of the worship of Baal, for this was brought from without by Jezebel; and *Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.* But of the sin of the calf they could not be healed. In this sin all the kings of Israel were impenitent.

From Israel was it also. Their boast, that they were of Israel, aggravated their sin. They said to God, *we, Israel, know thee.* So then their offence, too, their brutishness also, was from those who boasted themselves of bearing the name of their forefather, Israel, who were the chosen people of God, so distinguished by His favor. The name of Israel, suggesting their near relation to God, and the great things which He had done for them, and their solemn covenant with Him to be His people as He was their God, should, in itself, have made them ashamed of such brutishness. So S. Paul appealeth to us by our name of Christians⁵, *Let every one who nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

The workman made it, therefore it is not God. The workman was rather a god to his idol, than it to him; for he made it; it was a thing made. To say that it was made, was to deny that it was God. Hence the prophets so often

⁴ Is. i. 13.

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

Before CHRIST
cir. 760. it; therefore it is not God:
but the calf of Samaria
shall be broken in pieces.
7 For 'they have sown
the wind, and they shall
reap the whirlwind: it hath

Prov. 22. 8.
ch. 10, 12, 13.

no || stalk: the bud shall
yield no meal: if so be it
yield, 'the strangers shall
swallow it up.

8 'Israel is swallowed
up: now shall they be

Before CHRIST
cir. 760.

1 Or, *standing corn*.
2 ch. 7. 9.

2 Kgs. 17. 6.

urge this special proof of the vanity of idols. No creature can be God. Nor can there be anything, between God and a creature. "Every substance which is not God is a creature; and that which is not a creature, is God." God Himself could not make a creature who should be God. The Arian herey, which imagined that God the Son could be a creature and yet an object of our worship, or that there could be a secondary god, was folly² as well as blasphemy. They did not conceive what God is. They had low, debased notions of the Godhead. They knew not that the Creator must be removed as infinitely above His most exalted creature, as above the lowest.

Nor do the prophets need any subtleties (such as the heathen alleged) that their idol might be indwelt by some influence. Since God dwelt not in it, any such influence could only come from a creature, and that, an evil one.

The calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. The calves were set up at Bethel and at Dan, but they were the sort of tutelar deity of the ten tribes; therefore they are called *the calf of Samaria*. They represented one and the same thing; whence they are called as one, *the calf*, not "calves." A thing of nought it was in its origin, for it had its form and shape from man; a thing of nought it should be in its end, for it should be *broken in pieces*, or become *chips, fragments*, for fire³.

7. *For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. They shall reap*, not merely as *they have sown*, but with an awful increase. They sowed folly and vanity, and shall reap, not merely emptiness and disappointment, but sudden, irresistible destruction⁴. *They sowed the wind*, and, as one seed bringeth forth many, so the wind, "penn'd up," as it were, in this destructive tillage, should "burst forth again, reinforced in strength, in mightier store and with greater violence." Thus they *reaped the whirlwind*, yea, (as the word means) *a mighty whirlwind*⁵. But the whirlwind which they reap doth not belong to *them*; rather they belong to it,

¹ S. Aug. de Trin. i. 6.

² See S. Athanas. against Arians, p. 3. n. f. 10. u. 191. d. 30Lc. 411. b. 423. m. Oxf. Tr.

³ Some derive the word שֶׁבֶבִּים from an Arabic root, *kindled*, others from a Talmudic word, *fragment*. The word is the same as the Arabic *Shebab*, "that whereby fire is kindled," fuel for fire. The

blown away by it, like chaff, the sport and mockery of its restless violence.

It hath no stalk. If their design should for the time seem to prosper, all should be but empty shew, disappointing the more, the more it should seem to promise. He speaks of three stages of progress. First, the seed should not send forth the corn with the ear; *it hath no stalk or standing corn*; even if it advanced thus far, still the ear should yield no meat; or should it perchance yield this, the enemy should devour it. Since the yielding fruit denotes doing works, the fruit of God's grace, the absence of the *standing corn* represents the absence of good works altogether; the absence of the *meal*, that nothing is brought to ripeness; the *devouring by the enemy*, that what would otherwise be good, is, through faulty intentions or want of purity of purpose, given to Satan and the world, not to God. "When hypocrites make a shew of good works, they gratify therewith the longings of the evil spirits. For they who do not seek to please God therewith, minister not to the Lord of the field, but to *strangers*. The hypocrite, then, like a fruitful but neglected "ear," cannot retain his fruit, because the "ear" of good works lieth on the ground. And yet he is fed by this very folly, because for his good works he is honored by all, eminent above the rest; men's minds are subject to him; he is raised to high places; nurtured by favors. But then will he understand that he has done foolishly, when, for the delight of praise, he shall receive the sentence of the rebuke of God."

8. *Israel is swallowed up.* Not only shall all which they have, be swallowed up by the enemy, but themselves also; and this, not at any distant time, but *now*. Now, at a time all but present, *they shall be among the Gentiles*, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, or, quite strictly, *Now they have become, among the Gentiles*. He speaks of what should certainly be, as though it already were. *A vessel wherein is no pleasure*, is what S. Paul calls¹ *a vessel to dishonor*, as opposed to *vessels to honor* or honorable uses. It is then some vessel put to vile uses,

Talm. word may be no original word, but formed from the Heb. in the sense which those writers conceived it to have in this place.

² Hosea expressed this in four words; יָרוּחַ יִרְעֵן וְסוּפָה יִקְצֹר

³ The form קוֹפֶת is intensive of קוֹפֶה.

⁴ S. Greg. Mor. viii. 71.

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 20.

Before
CH R I S T
cir. 760. among the Gentiles^a as a
vessel wherein is no pleas-

= Jer. 22. 28. &
48. 38.

= 2 Kgs. 15. 19. 9 For^a they are gone

up to Assyria, °a wild
ass alone by himself:
Ephraim °hath hired
† lovers.

Before
CH R I S T
cir. 760.

° Jer. 2. 24.

cir. 771.

† Isai. 30. 6.

Ezek. 16. 33, 34.

† Heb. loves.

such as people turn away from with disgust. Such has been the history of the ten tribes ever since: *swallowed up*, not destroyed; among the nations, yet not of them; despised and mingled among them, yet not united with them; having an existence, yet among that large whole, *the nations*, in whom their national existence has been at once preserved and lost; everywhere had in dishonor; the Heathen and the Mohammedan have alike despised, outraged, insulted them; avenging upon them, unconsciously, the dishonor which they did to God. The Jews were treated by the Romans of old as offensive to the smell, and are so by the Mohammedans of North Africa still. "Never," says a writer of the fifth century¹, "has Israel been put to any honorable office, so as, after losing the marks of freedom and power, at least to have the rank of honorable servitude; but, like a vessel made for dishonorable offices, so they have been filled with revolting contumelies." "The most despised of those in servitude" was the title given by the Roman historian to the Jews, while yet in their own land. Wealth, otherwise so coveted, for the most part has not exempted them from dishonor, but exposed them to outrage. Individuals have risen to eminence in philosophy, medicine, finance; but the race has not gained through the credit of its members; rather, these have, for the most part, risen to reputation for intellect, amid the wreck of their own faith. When Hosea wrote this, two centuries had passed, since the fame of Solomon's wisdom (which still is venerated in the East) spread far and wide; Israel was hated and envied by its neighbors, not despised; no token of contempt yet attached to them; yet Hosea foretold that it should shortly be; and, for two thousand years, it has, in the main, been the characteristic of their nation.

9. For they are gone up to Assyria. The ground of this their captivity is that wherein they placed their hope of safety. They shall be presently swallowed up; for they went to Asshur. The Holy Land being then honored by the special presence of God, all nations are said to go up to it. Now, since Israel forgetting God, their strength and their glory, went to the Assyrian for help, he is said to go up thither, whither he went as a suppliant.

¹ Orosius App. Ruf. p. 439. Lap.

* Poc.

² Pallas, Reisen iii. p. 511.

³ See Ker Porter, Travels, i. p. 459. Its Hebrew names אֲשׁוּר and perhaps אֲשׁוּר are from swiftness.

A wild ass alone by himself. "As the ox which knoweth its owner, and the ass its Master's crib, represents each believer, of Jew or Gentile; Israel, who would not know Him, is called the wild ass." The pere, or wild ass of the East, is "a heady, unruly, undisciplinable³, obstinate, running with swiftness far outstripping the swiftest horse⁴, whither his lust, hunger, thirst, draw him without rule or direction, hardly to be turned aside from his intended course." Although often found in bands, one often breaks away by himself, exposing itself for a prey to lions, whence it is said, *the wild ass is the lion's prey in the wilderness*⁵. Wild as the Arab was, a "wild ass's colt by himself⁶," is to him a proverb for one "singular, obstinate, pertinacious in his purpose." Such is man by nature⁸; such, it was foretold to Abraham, Ishmael would be⁹; such Israel again became; "stubborn, heady, selfwilled, refusing to be ruled by God's law and His counsel, in which he might find safety, and, of his own mind, running to the Assyrian," there to perish.

Ephraim hath hired lovers or loves. The plural, in itself, shews that they were sinful loves, since God had said, *a man shall cleave unto his wife and they twain shall be one flesh*. These sinful loves or lovers she was not tempted by, but she herself invited them¹⁰. It is a special and unwonted sin, when woman, forsaking the modesty which God gives her as a defence, becomes the temptress. "Like such a bad woman, luring others to love her, they, forsaking God, to Whom, as by covenant of marriage, they ought to have cleaved, and on Him alone to have depended, sought to make friends of the Assyrian, to help them in their rebellions against Him, and so put themselves to that charge (as sinners usually do) in the service of sin, which in God's service they need not to have been at."

And yet that which God pictures under colors so offensive, what was it in human eyes? The hire was presents of gold to powerful nations, whose aid, humanly speaking, Israel needed. But wherever it abandoned its trust in God, it adopted their idols. "Whoever has recourse to human means, without consulting God, or consulting whether He will, or will not bless them, is guilty of unfaithfulness which often leads to many

⁵ Ecclesi. xiii. 19.

⁶ The root in Arabic is the same as that here, אֲשׁוּר.

Poc. ⁷ See in Poc.

⁸ Job xi. 12.

⁹ Gen. xvi. 12.

¹⁰ See Ezek. xvi. 33, 4.

Before CHRIST
cir. 760.
Ezek. 16. 37.
ch. 10. 10.
Or, begin.
Or, in a little
while, as Hag.
2. 6.
Isai. 10. 8.
Ezek. 26. 7.
Dan. 2. 37.

10 Yea, though they
have hired among the na-
tions, now ^p will I gather
them, and they shall || sor-
row || a little for the burden
of ^r the king of princes.

Before CHRIST
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ch. 12. 11.

11 Because Ephraim
hath made ^r many altars to
sin, altars shall be unto
him to sin.

12 I have written to him ^r the great things of my

^r Deut. 4. 6, 8.
Pa. 119. 18.
& 147. 19, 20.

others. He becomes accustomed to the tone of mind of those whose protection he seeks, comes insensibly to approve even their errors, loses purity of heart and conscience, sacrifices his light and talents to the service of the powers, under whose shadow he wishes to live under repose."

10. *Yea, though they have hired, or better, because or when they hire among the heathen, now will I gather them; i. e. I will gather the nations together. The sin of Israel should bring its own punishment. He sent presents to the king of Assyria, in order to strengthen himself against the will of God; "he thought himself secured by his league made with them; but he should find himself much deceived in his policy;" he had hired among them only; now, ere long, very speedily, God Himself would gather them, i. e. those very nations, not in part, but altogether; not for the help of Israel, but for its destruction. As though a man would let out some water from a deep lake ponded up, the water, as it oozed out, loosened more and more the barriers which withheld it, until, at length, all gave way, and the water of the lake was poured out in one wide wild waste, desolating all, over which it swept. It may be, that Assyria would not have known of, or noticed Israel, had not Israel first invited him.*

And they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes. So great shall be the burden of the captivity hereafter, that they shall then sorrow but little for any burdens put upon them now, and which they now feel so heavy. The king of princes is the king of Assyria, who said ¹, Are not my princes altogether kings? The burden of which they complained will then be the thousand talents of silver which Menahem gave to Pul, king of Assyria, to support him in his usurpation, and in order to pay which, he exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver ².

If we adopt the E. M., begin, we must render, and they shall begin to be diminished through the burden of the king of the princes, i. e. they shall be gradually reduced and brought low through the exactions of the Assyrians, until in the end they shall be carried away. This

describes the gradual decay of Israel, first through the exactions of Pul, then through the captivity of Gilead by Tiglathpileser.

11. *Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall indeed be unto him to sin, i. e. they shall be proved to him to be so, by the punishment which they shall draw upon him. The prophet had first shewn them their folly in forsaking God for the help of man; now he shews them the folly of attempting to "secure themselves by their great shew and pretences of religion and devotion in a false way." God had appointed one altar at Jerusalem. There He willed the sacrifices to be offered, which He would accept. To multiply altars, much more to set up altars against the one altar, was to multiply sin. Hosea charges Israel elsewhere with this multiplying of altars, as a grievous sin. According to the multitude of his fruit, he hath increased altars. Their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field ³. They pretended doubtless, that they did it for a religious end, that they might thereon offer sacrifices for the expiation of their sins and appeasing of God. They endeavored to unite their own selfwill and the outward service of God. Therein they might deceive themselves; but they could not deceive God. He calls their act by its true name. To make altars at their own pleasure and to offer sacrifices upon them, under any pretence whatever, was to sin. So then, as many altars as they reared, so often did they repeat their sin; and this sin should be their only fruit. They should be, but only for sin. So God says of the two calves, This thing became a sin ⁴, and of the indiscriminate consecration of Priests (not of the family of Aaron), This thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth ⁵.*

12. *I have written to him the great things of My law, lit. I write. Their sin then had no excuse of ignorance. God had written their duties for them in the ten commandments with His own Hand; He had written them of old and manifoldly ⁶, often repeated and in divers manners. He wrote those manifold things to them [or for them] by Moses, not for that time only, but that they might be con-*

reading of the text, although often more difficult, is almost always right. Here, 127, "ten thousand things," as we say, "a thousand times," manifoldly, i. e. again and again.

¹ Isa. x. 8.

² 2 Kgs xv. 19, 20. ³ x. i. xii. 11.

⁴ 1 Kgs xii. 30.

⁵ Ib. xiii. 33, 34.

⁶ The E. V. translates the Kri, or marginal correction. The meaning is much the same, but the

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law, but they were counted
as a strange thing.

* Jer. 7. 21.
Zeoh. 7. 6.
Or, *In the
sacrifices of
mine offerings,
they, &c.*
* Jer. 14. 10, 12.

13 || They sacrifice flesh
for the sacrifices of mine
offerings, and eat it; * but

c. 5. 6. & 9. 4. Amos 5. 22.

tinually before their eyes, as if He were still writing. He had written to them since, in their histories, in the Psalms. His words were still sounding in their ears through the teaching of the prophets. God did not only give His law or revelation once for all, and so leave it. By His providence and by His ministers He continually renewed the knowledge of it, so that those who ignored it, should have no excuse. This ever-renewed agency of God He expresses by the word, *I write*, what in substance was long ago written. What God then wrote, were the *great things of His law* (as the converted Jews, on the day of Pentecost speak of the *great or wonderful things of God*¹) or the *manifest things of His law*, as the Apostle speaks of the *manifest wisdom of God*², and says, that *God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*.

They were counted as a strange thing by them. These *great, or manifest things of God's law*, which ought to have been continually before their eyes, in their mind and in their mouth³, they, although God had written them for them, counted as a *strange thing*, a thing quite foreign and alien to them, with which they had no concern. Perhaps this was their excuse to themselves, that it was *foreign to them*. * As Christians say now, that one is not to take God's law so precisely; that the Gospel is not so strict as the law; that men, before the grace of the Gospel, had to be stricter than with it; that the *liberty of the Gospel* is freedom, not from sin, but from duty; that such and such things belonged to the early Christians, while they were surrounded by heathen, or to the first times of the Gospel, or to the days when it was persecuted; that riches were dangerous, when people could scarcely have them, not now, when every one has them; that "vice lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness⁴;" that the world was perilous, when it was the Christian's open foe, not now, when it would be friends with us, and have us friends with it; that, *love not the world* was a precept for times when the world hated us, not now, when it is all around us, and steals our hearts. So Jeroboam and Israel too doubtless said, that those prohibitions of idolatry

the LORD accepteth them
not; * now will he remem-
ber their iniquity, and visit
their sins: * they shall re-
turn to Egypt.

Before
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* ch. 9. 9.
Amos 8. 7.
* Deut. 28. 68.
ch. 9. 3, 6. &
11. 5.

were necessary, when the heathen were still in the land, or while their forefathers were just fresh out of Egypt; that it was, after all, God, Who, was worshiped under the calves; that state-policy required it; that Jeroboam was appointed by God, and must needs carry out that appointment, as he best could. With these or the like excuses, he must doubtless have excused himself, as though God's law were good, but *foreign to them*. God counts such excuses, not as a plea, but as a sin.

13. *They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of Mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not.* As they rejected God's law, so God rejected their sacrifices, which were not offered according to His law. They, doubtless, thought much of their sacrifices; and this the prophet perhaps expresses by an intensive form⁵; *the sacrifices of My gifts, gifts*, as though they thought, that they were ever giving. God accounted such sacrifices, not being hallowed by the end for which He instituted them, as mere *flesh*. They offered *flesh* and ate it. Such was the beginning, and such the only end. *He would not accept them*. Nay, contrariwise, *now*, now while they were offering the sacrifices, God would shew in deed that He remembered the sins, for which they were intended to atone. God seems to man to forget his sins, when He forbears to punish them; to *remember them*, when He punishes.

They shall return to Egypt. God had commanded them to return no more to Egypt⁷ of their own mind. But He had threatened that, on their disobedience, *the Lord would bring them back to Egypt by the way, whereof He spake unto them, Thou shalt see it no more again*⁸. Hosea also foretells to them, that they (i. e. many of them) should go to Egypt and perish there⁹. Thence also, as from Assyria, they were to be restored¹⁰. Most probably then, Hosea means to threaten an actual return to Egypt, as we are told, that some of the two tribes did go there for refuge, against the express command of God¹¹. The main part of the ten tribes were taken to Assyria, yet as they were, even under Hosea, conspiring with Egypt¹², such as could, (it is likely) took refuge there. Else, as future

¹ τὰ μεγάλα τοῦ θεοῦ Acts ii. 11. ² Eph. iii. 10.

³ Heb. i. 1. ⁴ Deut. vi. 7-9.

⁵ Burke on the French Revolution.

⁶ חֲבִיב is an intensive form from חָבַב gave. See

above on iv. 18. The word occurs here only, and was probably made by Hosea.

⁷ Deut. xvii. 16. ⁸ 1b xxviii. 68. ⁹ ch. ix. 3, 6.

¹⁰ ch. xlii. 11. ¹¹ Jer. xlii. xliiii. ¹² 2 Kgs xvii. 4.

Before
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* Deut. 32. 18.
* Isai. 29. 23.
Eph. 2. 10.
* 1 Kgs. 12. 31.

* Jer. 17. 27.
Amos 2. 5.

14 * For Israel hath forgotten ^b his Maker, and
* buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities; but ^a I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

deliverance, temporal or spiritual, is foretold under the image of the deliverance out of Egypt, so, contrariwise, the threat, *they shall return to Egypt*, may be, in figure, a cancelling of the covenant, whereby God had promised, that *His* people should not return: a threat of renewed bondage, *like* the Egyptian; an abandonment of them to the state, from which God once had freed them and had made them His people.

14. For Israel hath forgotten his Maker. God was his Maker, not only as the Creator of all things, but as the Author of his existence as a people, as He saith ¹, *hath He not made thee, and established thee?*

And buildeth temples; as for the two calves, at Bethel and at Dan. Since God had commanded to build one temple only, that at Jerusalem, to build temples was in itself sin. The sin charged on Ephraim is idolatry; that of Judah is self-confidence ²; whence Isaiah blames them, that they were busy in repairing the breaches of the city, and cutting off the supplies of water from the enemy; *but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto Him, that fashioned it long ago* ³. Jeremiah also says ⁴, *that they shall impoverish [or, crush] the fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.*

But I will send a fire upon his cities. In the letter, the words relate to Judah; but in substance, the whole relates to both. Both had forgotten God; both had offended Him. In the doom of others, each sinner may read his own. Of the cities of Judah, Isaiah says, *your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire* ⁵ and in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, (some twelve years probably after the death of Hosea) Sennacherib came up against all the cities of Judah and took them ⁶; and of Jerusalem it is related, that Nebuchadnezzar ⁷ burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house he burnt with fire. Man set them on fire; God brought it to pass; and, in order to teach us that He doeth all things, giving all good, overruling all evil, saith that He was the doer of it.

¹ Deut. xxxii. 6.

² ch. xxii. 11.

³ 2 Kgs. xviii. 13.

⁴ See Intro. p. 5.

⁵ ch. i. 7.

⁶ 1 Th. xxv. 8, 9.

CHAPTER IX.

The distress and captivity of Israel
for their sins and idolatry.

Before
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REJOICE not, O Israel,
for joy, as other people;
for thou ^a hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a ^b reward || upon every cornfloor.

* ch. 4. 12. & 5.
4. 7.
* Jer. 44. 17.
ch. 2. 12.
Or, in, &c.

IX. 1. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people. *lit. rejoice not to exultation, so as to bound and leap for joy* ^a. The prophet seems to come across the people in the midst of their festivity and mirth, and arrests them by abruptly stopping it, telling them, that they had no cause for joy. Hosea witnessed days of Israel's prosperity under Jeroboam II; the land had peace under Menahem after the departure of Pul; Pekah was even strong, so as, in his alliance with Rezin, to be an object of terror to Judah ⁹, until Tiglath-Pileser came against him. At some of these times, Israel seems to have given himself to exuberant mirth, whether at harvest-time, or on any other ground, enjoying the present, secure for the future. On this rejoicing Hosea breaks in with his stern, *rejoice not*. ¹⁰ *In His Presence is fulness of joy, true, solid, lasting joy.* How then could Israel joy, who had gone a whoring from his God? Other nations might joy; for they had no imminent judgment to fear. Their sins had been sins of ignorance; none had sinned like Israel. They had not even ¹¹ *changed their gods, which were no gods.* If other people did not thank God for His gifts, and thanked their idols, they had not been taught otherwise. Israel had been taught, and so his sin was sin against light. Whence God says by Amos ¹², *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.* ¹³ It was ever the sin of Israel to wish to joy as other nations. So they said to Samuel, *make us a king to judge us, like all the nations.* And when Samuel told the people the word of God, *they have rejected Me that I should not reign over them, they still said, Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations* ¹⁴. This was the joy of the nations, to have another king than God, and with this joy Israel wished to exult, when it asked for Saul as king; when it followed Jeroboam; when it denied Christ before the presence of Pilate, saying, *we have no king but Cæsar.* But the people who received the law, and professed the worship of God, might not exult as other people who had not

^a as in Job iii. 22.

⁹ Is. vii.

¹⁰ Jer. ii. 11.

¹¹ 1 Sam. viii. 5, 10, 7, 19, 20.

¹² Is. vii.

¹³ iii. 2.

¹⁴ Ps. xvi. 11.

¹⁵ Ps. xvi. 11.

¹⁶ Rup.

Before
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* ch. 2, 9, 12.
† Or, *winefat*.

2 *The floor and the
|| winepress shall not feed
them, and the new wine
shall fail in her.

3 They shall not dwell

in ^d the LORD's land ; * but
Ephraim shall return to
Egypt, and 'they shall
eat unclean things * in
Assyria.

but into another bondage as bad as that. * Ezek. 4.
13. Dan. 1. 8. * 2 Kgs. 17. 6. ch. 11. 11.

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CHRIST
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* Lev. 25. 23.
Jer. 2. 7. & 16.

18.
ch. 8. 13, &
11. 5. Not in
Egypt itself,

the knowledge of God, that, like them, it should, after forsaking God, be allowed to enjoy temporal prosperity, like theirs. He says, *rejoice not like the nations*, viz. for it is not allowed thee. Why? *for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God*. The punishment of the adulteress, who departs by unfaithfulness from her husband, is other than that of the harlot, who had never plighted her faith, nor had ever been bound by the bond of marriage. Thou obtainedst God for thy Husband, and didst forsake Him for another, yea, for many others, in the desert, in Samaria, even in Jerusalem, for the golden calves, for Baal, and the other monstrous gods, and lastly, when, denying Christ, thou didst prefer Barabbas. *Rejoice not* then, with the joy of the nations; for the curses of the law, written against thee, allow thee not. ¹ *Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field; cursed thy basket and thy store; cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land; the increase of thy kine and the flocks of thy sheep; cursed thou in thy coming in, and cursed thou in thy going out*. Other nations enjoyed the fruit of their own labors; thou tookest the labors of others as a hire, to observe His laws.²

Thou hast loved a reward [lit. the hire³ of a harlot] on every corn-floor. Israel had no heart, except for temporal prosperity. This he loved, wheresoever he found it; and so, on every corn-floor, whereon the fruits of the earth were gathered for the threshing, he received it from his idols, as the hire, for which he praised them "for the good things which he had received from a better Giver." "Perverse love! Thou oughtest to love God to use His rewards. Thou lovedst the reward, despisedst God. So then thou wentest a whoring from thy God, because thou didst turn away the love, wherewith thou oughtest to love God, to love the hire; and this not sparingly, nor any how, but on every barn-floor, with avarice so boundless and so deep, that all the barn-floors could not satisfy thee." The first-fruits, and the free-will-offering, they retained, turned them away from the service of God, and offered them to their idols.

¹ Deut. xxviii. 16-19.

² Ps. cv. 45.

³ li. 12. viii. 9. Ezek. xxi. 31, 34. Mic. i. 7.

⁴ Rup

⁵ vii. 13.

⁶ The fact that Greek or Latin poets use the same language without any moral reference, is no reason

2. *The floor and winepress shall not feed them*. God turneth away wholly from the adulterous people, and telleth others, how justly they shall be dealt with for this. "Because she loved My reward, and despised Myself, the reward itself shall be taken away from her." When the blessings of God have been abused to sin, He, in mercy and judgment, takes them away. He cut them off, in order to shew that He alone, Who now withheld them, had before given them. When they thought themselves most secure, when the corn was stored on the floor, and the grapes were in the press, then God would deprive them of them.

And the new wine shall fail in her, or shall fail her, lit. shall lie to her. It may be, he would say, that as Israel had lied to his God, and had spoken lies against Him⁵, so, in requital, the fruits of the earth should disappoint her, and holding out hopes which never came to pass, should, as it were, lie to her, and in the bitterness of her disappointment, represent to her her own failure to her God. The prophet teaches through the workings of nature, and gives, as it were, a tongue to them⁶.

3. *They shall not dwell in the Lord's land*. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. Yet He had chosen the land of Canaan, there to place His people; there, above others, to work His miracles; there to reveal Himself; there to send His Son to take our flesh. He had put Israel in possession of it, to hold it under Him on condition of obedience. Contrariwise, God had denounced to them again and again; ⁷ *if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to possess it*. The fifth commandment, ⁸ *the first commandment with promise*, still implies the same condition, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. God makes the express reserve that the land is His. The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me⁹. It was then an aggravation of their sin, that they had sinned in God's land. It was to sin in His special

why there should be none such in a prophet's. They spoke the language of earthly disappointment; He declares the judgment of God.

⁷ Deut. xxx. 17, 18.

⁸ Eph. v. 2.

⁹ Lev. xxv. 23.

Before
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4 ^b They shall not offer
wine offerings to the LORD,
^c neither shall they be pleas-
ing unto him : ^d their sacri-

Before
CHRIST
cir. 700.

fices shall be unto them as
the bread of mourners ; all
that eat thereof shall be
polluted : for their bread

Presence. To offer its first-fruits to idols, was to disown God as its Lord, and to own His adversary. In removing them, then, from His land, God removed them from occasions of sin.

But Ephraim shall return to Egypt. He had broken the covenant, whereon God had promised, that they should not return there¹. They had recourse to Egypt against the Will of God. Against their own will, they should be sent back there, in banishment and distress, as of old, and in separation from their God.

And they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. So in Ezekiel, ² The children of Israel shall eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. Not to eat things common or unclean was one of the marks which God had given them, whereby he distinguished them as His people. While God owned them as His people, He would protect them against such necessity. The histories of Daniel, of Eleazar and the Maccabees³, shew how sorely pious Jews felt the compulsion to eat things unclean. Yet this doubtless Israel had done in his own land, if not in other ways, at least in eating things offered to idols. Now then, through necessity or constraint, they were to be forced, for their sustenance, to eat things unclean, such as were, to them, all things killed with the blood in them, i. e. as almost all things are killed now. They who had wilfully transgressed God's law, should now be forced to live in the habitual breach of that law, in a matter which placed them on a level with the heathen. People, who have no scruple about breaking God's moral law, feel keenly the removal of any distinction, which places them above others. They had been as heathen ; they should be in the condition of heathen.

4. They shall not offer wine-offerings to the Lord. The wine or drink-offering was annexed to all their burnt-offerings, and so to all their public sacrifices. The burnt-offering (and with it the meal and the wine-offering,) was the daily morning and evening sacrifice⁴, and the sacrifice of the Sabbath⁵. It was offered, together with the sin-offering, on the first of the month, the Passover, the feast of the first-fruits, of trumpets, of tabernacles, and the Days of Atonement, besides

the special sacrifices of that day⁶. It entered also into private life⁷. The drink-offering accompanied also the peace-offering⁸. As the burnt-offering, on which the offerer laid his hand⁹, and which was wholly consumed by the sacred fire which at first fell from heaven, expressed the entire self-devotion of the offerer, that he owed himself wholly to his God ; and as the peace-offering was the expression of thankfulness, which was at peace with God ; so the outpouring of the wine betokened the joy, which accompanies that entire self-oblation, that thankfulness in self-oblation of a soul accepted by God. In denying, then, that Israel should offer wine-offerings, the prophet says, that all the joy of their service of God, nay all their public service should cease. As he had before said, that they should be for many days without sacrifice¹⁰, so now, he says, in fact, that they should live without the prescribed means of pleading to God the Atonement to come. Whence he adds,

Neither shall they be pleasing to the Lord ; for they should no longer have the means prescribed for reconciliation with God¹¹. Such is the state of Israel now. God appointed one way of reconciliation with Himself, the Sacrifice of Christ. Sacrifice pictured this, and pleaded it to Him, from the fall until Christ Himself appeared, once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself¹². Soon after, when time had been given to the Jews to learn to acknowledge Him, all bloody sacrifices ceased. Since then the Jews have lived without that means of reconciliation, which God appointed. It availed, not in itself, but as being appointed by God to foreshadow and plead that one sacrifice. So He Who, by our poverty and void, awakens in us the longing for Himself, would through the anomalous condition, to which He has, by the orderings of His Divine Providence, brought His former people, call forth in them that sense of need, which would bring them to Christ. In their half-obedience, they remain under the ceremonial law which He gave them, although He called them, and still calls them, to exchange the shadow for the substance in Christ. But in that they cannot fulfill the requirements of the law, even in its outward form, the law, which

¹ See ab. on viii. 13.

² iv. 13.

³ Dan. i. 8. 2 Macc. vi. vii.

⁴ Ex. xxix. 38-41. Nu. xxviii. 3-8.

⁵ Ib. 9.

⁶ Ib. 11, 15, 16, 19, 22, 26, 7, 30. xxix. 11, 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 12-34.

⁷ Lev. i. Nu. xv. 3, 10.

⁸ Nu. xv. 8, 10.

⁹ Lev. i. 4.

¹⁰ iii. 4.

¹¹ The word יְרֵכָה shall be pleasing is most naturally understood of the persons of whom it had just been said, they shall not offer, not of the wine : for this is the object, not the subject ; and is in the singular, not the plural.

¹² Heb. ix. 26.

Before
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cir. 760.

¹ for their soul shall not
come into the house of the
LORD.

¹ Lev. 17. 11.
² ch. 2. 11.
5 What will ye do in
the solemn day, and in
the day of the feast of the
LORD?

6 For, lo, they are gone

they acknowledge, bears witness to them, that they are not living according to the mind of God.

Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners. He had said that they should not sacrifice to God, when no longer in the Lord's land. He adds that, if they should attempt it, their sacrifices, so far from being a means of acceptance, should be defiled, and a source of defilement to them. *All which was in the same tent or house with a dead body, was unclean for seven days*¹. The bread, which they ate then, was defiled. *If one unclean by a dead body touched bread or pottage or any meat, it was unclean*². In offering the tithes, a man was commanded to declare, *I have not eaten of it in my mourning*³. So would God impress on the soul the awfulness of death, and man's sinfulness, of which death is the punishment. He does not say, that they would offer sacrifices, but that their sacrifices, if offered as God did not command, would defile, not atone. It is in human nature, to neglect to serve God, when He wills it, and then to attempt to serve Him when He forbids it. Thus Israel, affrighted by the report of the spies⁴, would not go up to the promised land, when God commanded it. When God had sentenced them, not to go up, but to die in the wilderness, then they attempted it. Sacrifice, according to God's law, could only be offered in the promised land. In their captivity, then, it would be a fresh sin.

For their bread for their soul, or is for their soul, i. e. for themselves; it is for whatever use they can make of it for this life's needs, to support life. Nothing of it would be admitted into the house of the Lord, as offered to Him or accepted by Him.

5. *What will ye do in the solemn day?* Man is content to remain far from God, so that God do not shew him, that He has withdrawn Himself from him. Man would fain have the power of drawing near to God in time of calamity, or when he himself likes. He would fain have God at his command, as it were, not be at

¹ Nu. xix. 14.
² Deut. xxvi. 15.
³ Num. x. 10.

⁴ Hagg. ii. 12, 13.
⁵ Nu. xiv.
⁶ ch. ii. 11.

because of † destruction:

° Egypt shall gather them

up, Memphis shall bury † them: || † the pleasant places for their silver, ° net- tles shall possess them: † thorns shall be in their tabernacles.

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† Heb. spoil.
ch. 7. 16.
ver. 3.
† Or, their silver shall be desired, the nettle, &c.
† Heb. the desire.
Is. 5. 6. & 32.
13. & 34. 13.
ch. 10. 8.

the command of God. God cuts off this hope altogether. He singles out the great festivals, which commemorated His great doings for His people, as though they had no more share in those mercies. The more solemn the day, the more total man's exclusion, the more manifest God's withdrawal. To one shut out from His service, the days of deepest religious joy became the days of deepest sorrow. Mirth is turned into heaviness. To be deprived of the ordinary daily sacrifice was a source of continual sorrow; how much more, *in the days of their gladness*¹, in which they were bidden to rejoice before the Lord, and "in which they seemed to have a nearer and more familiar access to God." True, that having separated themselves from the Temple, they had no right to celebrate these feasts, which were to be held in the place which God had chosen to place His name there. Man, however, clings to the shadow of God's service, when he has parted with the substance. And so God foretold them before², that He would make all their mirth to cease.

6. *For lo, they are gone because of destruction.* They had fled, for fear of destruction, to destruction. For fear of the destruction from Assyria, they were fled away and gone to Egypt, hoping, doubtless, to find there some temporary refuge, until the Assyrian invasion should have swept by. But, as befalls those who flee from God, they fell into more certain destruction.

Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them. They had fled singly, in making their escape from the Assyrian. Egypt shall receive them, and shall gather them together, but only to one common burial, so that none should escape. So Jeremiah says³, *They shall not be gathered nor buried; and Ezekiel*⁴, *Thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered.* Memphis is the Greek name for the Egyptian Mamptha, whence the Hebrew Moph⁵; or Man- uph, whence the Hebrew Noph⁶. It was at this time the capital of Egypt, whose idols God threatens⁷. Its name, "the dwelling of Phtha," the Greek Vulcan, marked it, as a

¹ viii. 2.
² Is. xix. 13. Jer. ii. 16. xlii. 1. xlvii. 14. Ezek. xxx. 13 sqq.
³ xxix. 5.
⁴ here.
⁵ here.
⁶ here.
⁷ here.

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7 The days of visitation
are come, the days of recom-
pence are come; Israel
shall know it: the prophet

is a fool, the † spiritual
man is mad, for the multi-
tude of thine iniquity, and
the great hatred.

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† Ezek. 13. 3,
&c.
Mic. 2. 11.
Zeph. 3. 4.

† Heb. man of the spirit.

seat of idolatry; and in it was the celebrated court of Apis¹, the original of Jeroboam's calf. There in the home of the idol for whom they forsook their God, they should be gathered to burial. It was reputed to be the burial-place of Osiris, and hence was a favorite burial-place of the Egyptians. It once embraced a circuit of almost 19 miles², with magnificent buildings; it declined after the building of Alexandria; its very ruins gradually perished, after Cairo rose in its neighborhood.

The pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them. The E. M. gives the same sense in different words; *their silver shall be desired*; (as Obadiah saith³, *his hidden treasures were searched out*) *nettles shall inherit them.* In either way, it is a picture of utter desolation. The long rank grass or the nettle, waving amid man's habitations, looks all the sadder, as betokening that man once was there, and is gone. The desolate house looks like the grave of the departed. According to either rendering, the silver which they once had treasured, was gone. As they had *inherited and driven out* (the word is one) the nations, whose land God had given them, so now nettles and thorns should *inherit them*. These should be the only tenants of their treasure-houses and their dwellings.

7. *The days of visitation are come.* The false prophets had continually hood-winked the people, promising them that those days would never come. *They had put far away the evil day*⁴. Now it was not at hand only. In God's purpose, those days were come, irresistible, inevitable, inextricable; days in which God would visit, what in His long-suffering, He seemed to overlook, and would recompense each according to his works.

Israel shall know it. Israel would not know by believing it; now it should know, by feeling it.

The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad. The true Prophet gives to the false the title which they claimed for themselves, *the prophet and the man of the spirit*. Only the event shewed what spirit was in them, not the spirit of God but a lying spirit. The men of the world called the true prophets, *mad*, lit. maddened, *driven mad*⁵, as Festus thought

of S. Paul⁶; *Thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.* Jehu's captains called by the same name the young prophet whom Elisha sent to anoint him. *Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?*⁷ Shemaiah, the false prophet, who deposed God's priest, set false priests to be officers in the house of the Lord, to have an oversight as to every man who is mad and maketh himself a prophet, calling Jeremiah both a false prophet and a mad-man⁸. The event was the test. Of our Lord Himself, the Jews blasphemed, *He hath a devil and is mad*⁹. And long afterward, "madness," "phrensy" were among the names which the heathen gave to the faith in Christ¹⁰. As S. Paul says, that Christ crucified was to the Greeks and to them that perish, foolishness, and that the things of the Spirit of God, are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned¹¹. The man of the world and the Christian judge of the same things by clean contrary rules, use them for quite contrary ends. The slave of pleasure counts him mad, who foregoes it; the wealthy trader counts him mad, who gives away profusely. In these days, profusion for the love of Christ has been counted a ground for depriving a man of the care of his property. One or the other is mad. And worldlings must count the Christian mad; else they must own themselves to be so most fearfully. In the Day of Judgment, Wisdom says¹², *They, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honor. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!*

For the multitude of thine iniquity and the great hatred. The words stand at the close of the verse, as the reason of all which had gone before. Their manifold iniquity and their great hatred of God were the ground why the days of visitation and recompense should come. They were the ground also, why God allowed such prophets to delude them. The words, *the great hatred*, stand quite undefined, so that they may signify alike the hatred of Ephraim against God and good men and His true prophets, or God's hatred of them. Yet it,

¹ Herod. ii. 153.

² Diod. Sic. i. 61.

³ ver. 6.

⁴ Am. vi. 3.

⁵ The form *נִשְׁמָד* in passive. It is used of one driven to distraction through distress, (Deut. xxviii. 34,) and of loss of reason, 1 Sam. xxi. 16.

⁶ Acts xxvi. 24.

⁷ 2 Kings ix. 11.

⁸ Jer. xxix. 25, 6. The word is the same.

⁹ S. John x. 20.

¹⁰ See Tertul. Apol. 1. p. 4. and on de Test. An. p. 136. not. s. t. Oxf. Tr.

¹¹ 1 Cor. i. 18, 23. ii. 14.

¹² Wisd. v. 3-6.

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8 The 'watchman of
Ephraim was with my God:

* Jer. 6. 17. &
31. 6.
Ezek. 3. 17. & 33. 7.

but the prophet is a snare

of a fowler in all his ways
and hatred || in the house
of his God.

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[Or, against.

most likely, means, *their* great hatred, since of them the Prophet uses it again in the next verse. The sinner first neglects God; then, as the will of God is brought before him, he wilfully disobeys Him; then, when, he finds God's Will irreconcilably at variance with his own, or when God chastens him, he hates Him, and (the Prophet speaks out plainly) *hates Him greatly*.

8. *The watchman of Ephraim was with my God.* These words may well contrast the office of the true prophet with the false. For Israel had had many true prophets, and such was Hosea himself now. The true prophet was at all times *with God*. He was *with God*, as holpen by God, *watching* or looking out and on into the future by the help of God. He was *with God*, as walking with God in a constant sense of His Presence, and in continual communion with Him. He was *with God*, as associated by God with Himself, in teaching, warning, correcting, exhorting His people, as the Apostle says¹, *we then as workers together with Him*.

It might also be rendered in nearly the same sense, *Ephraim was a watchman with my God*, and this is more according to the Hebrew words². As though the whole people of Israel had an office from God, "and God addressed it as a whole, 'I made thee, as it were, a watchman and prophet of God to the neighboring nations, that through My Providence concerning thee, and thy living according to the law, they too might receive the knowledge of Me. But thou hast acted altogether contrary to this, for thou hast become a snare to them.'"

Yet perhaps, if so construed, it would rather mean, "Ephraim is a watchman, beside my God," as it is said, *'There is none upon earth, that I desire with Thee*, i. e. beside Thee. In God the Psalmist had all, and desired to have nothing *with*, i. e. beside God. Ephraim was not content with God's revelations, but would himself be a *seer*, an *espier* of future events, the Prophet says with indignation, *together with my God*. God, in fact, sufficed Ephraim not. Ahab hated God's prophet, because *he did not speak good concerning him but evil*³. And so the kings of Israel had court-prophets of their own, an establishment, as it would seem, of four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and four hundred prophets of Ashtaroth⁴, which was filled up

again by new impostors⁵, when after the miracle of Mount Carmel, Elijah, according to the law⁶, put to death the prophets of Baal. These false prophets, as well as those of Judah in her evil days, flattered the kings who supported them, misled them, encouraged them in disbelieving the threatenings of God, and so led to their destruction. By these means, the bad priests maintained their hold over the people. They were the Anti-Christ of the Old Testament, disputing the authority of God, in Whose Name they prophesied. Ephraim encouraged their sins, as God says of Judah by Jeremiah, *My people love to have it so*⁷. It willed to be deceived, and was so.

"On searching diligently ancient histories," says S. Jerome, "I could not find that any divided the Church, or seduced people from the house of the Lord, except those who have been set by God as priests and prophets, i. e. watchmen. These then are turned into a snare, setting a stumbling-block everywhere, so that whosoever entereth on their ways, falls, and cannot stand in Christ, and is led away by various errors and crooked paths to a precipice." "No one," says another great father⁸, "doth wider injury than one who acteth perversely, while he hath a name or an order of holiness." "God endureth no greater prejudice from any than from priests, when He seeth those whom He has set for the correction of others, give from themselves examples of perverseness, when *we* sin, who ought to restrain sin.—What shall become of the flock, when the pastors become wolves?"

The false prophet is the snare of a fowler in (lit. upon) all his ways; i. e. whatever Ephraim would do, wherever the people, as a whole or any of them, would go, there the false prophet beset them, endeavoring to make each and everything a means of holding them back from their God. This they did, *being hated in the house of his God*. As one says⁹, *I am (all) prayer*, because he was so given up to prayer that he seemed turned into prayer; his whole soul was concentrated in prayer; so of these it is said, *they were hated*. They hated so intensely, that their whole soul was turned into hatred; they were as we say, *hated personified*; hatred was embodied in them, and they ensouled with hate. They were also the source of hatred against God

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

² מִשְׁפָּט not being in construction with Ephraim.

³ Theod.

⁴ 1 Kgs. xxii. 8, 18.

⁵ Ps. lxxiii. 25.

⁶ 1b. xviii. 19.

⁷ 2 Kgs. iii. 13. x. 19.

⁸ Deut. xlii. 5. xvii. 6.

⁹ v. 31.

¹⁰ S. Greg. Past. i. 2; in Evang. Hom.

xvii. 14.

¹¹ Ps. cix. 4.

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* Isai. 31. 6.
ch. 10. 9.
* Judg. 19. 22.
* ch. 8. 13.

9 'They have deeply corrupted *themselves*, as in the days of *Gibeah: *'therefore* he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I

and man. And this each false prophet was in the house of his God! for God was still his God, although not owned by him as God. God is the sinner's God to avenge, if he will not allow Him to be his God, to convert and pardon.

9. *They have deeply corrupted themselves*; lit. *they have gone deep, they are corrupted*. They have deeply immersed themselves in wickedness; have gone to the greatest depth they could, in it; they are sunk in it, so that they could hardly be extricated from it; and this, of their own deliberate intent; they contrived it deeply, hiding themselves, as they hoped, from God.

As in the days of Gibeah, when Benjamin espoused the cause of the children of Belial who had wrought such horrible brutishness in Gibeah towards the concubine of the Levite. This they maintained with such obstinacy, that, through God's judgment, the whole tribe perished, except six hundred men. Deeply they must have already corrupted themselves, who supported such guilt. Such corruption and such obstinacy was their's still.

Therefore he will remember their iniquity. God seemed for a time, as if He overlooked the guilt of Benjamin in the days of Gibeah; for at first He allowed them to be even victorious over Israel, yet in the end, they were punished, almost to extermination, and Gibeah was destroyed. So now, although He bore long with Ephraim, He would, in the end shew that He remembered all by visiting all.

10. *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness*. God is not said to find anything, as though He had lost it, or knew not where it was, or came suddenly upon it, not expecting it. They were lost, as relates to Him, when they were found by Him. As our Lord says of the returned prodigal, *This my son was lost and is found*¹. He found them and made them pleasant in His own sight, "as grapes which a man finds unexpectedly, in a great terrible

saw your fathers as "the first-ripe in the fig tree" at her first time: *but* they went to 'Baal-peor, and "separated themselves" unto that shame; "and their abominations were according as they loved.

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* Isai. 28. 4.
Mic. 7. 1.
* See chap. 2. 15.
* Num. 25. 3.
Ps. 106. 28.
* ch. 4. 14.
Jer. 11. 13.
See Judg. 6. 32.
* Ps. 81. 12.
Ezek. 20. 8.
Amos 4. 5.

wilderness of fiery serpents and drought"², where commonly nothing pleasant or refreshing grows; or as the first ripe in the fig-tree at her fresh time, whose sweetness passed into a proverb, both from its own freshness and from the long abstinence³. God gave to Israel both richness and pleasantness in His own sight; but Israel, from the first, corrupted God's good gifts in them. This generation only did as their fathers. So S. Stephen, setting forth to the Jews how their fathers had rebelled against Moses, and persecuted the prophets, sums up; as *your fathers did, so do ye*⁴. Each generation was filling up the measure of their fathers, until it was full; as the whole world is doing now⁵.

But they went to Baal-Peor. They, the word is emphatic; these same persons to whom God shewed such love, to whom He gave such gifts, went. They left God Who called them, and went to the idol, which could not call them. Baal-Peor, as his name probably implies, was "the filthiest and foulest of the heathen gods." It appears from the history of the daughters of Midian, that his worship consisted in deeds of shame⁶.

And separated themselves unto that shame, i. e. to Baal-Peor, whose name of *Baal, Lord*, he turns into *Bosheth, shame*¹. Holy Scripture gives disgraceful names to the idols, (as *abominations, nothings, dungy things, vanities, uncleanness*²,) in order to make men ashamed of them. To this shame they separated themselves from God, in order to unite themselves with it. The Nazarite separated himself from certain earthly enjoyments, and consecrated himself, for a time or altogether, to God³; these separated themselves from God, and united, devoted, consecrated themselves to shame. "They made themselves, as it were, Nazarites to shame." Shame was the object of their worship and their God, and their abominations were according as they loved, i. e. they had as many abominations or abominable idols, as they had loves. They multiplied

¹ S. Luke xv. 32.

² Deut. viii. 15.

³ See Is. xxviii. 4. ⁴ Acts vii. 51. ⁵ Rev. xiv. 15.

⁶ Num. xxv.

¹ as in 2 Sam. xi. 21.

* גוילים הכלים all common names of idols; (also, גויל נדרה) 2 Chr. xxix. 5.

* הגנור Num. vi. 2, 5, 6. מן Ib. 3. See on Am. ii. 11.

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11 *As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and*

abominations, after their heart's desire; their abominations were manifold, because their passions were so; and their love being corrupted, they loved nothing but abominations. Yet it seems simpler and truer to render it, *and they became abominations, like their loves*; as the Psalmist says, *They that make them are like unto them*.¹ "The object which the will desires and loves, transfuses its own goodness or badness into it." Man first makes his god like his own corrupt self, or to some corruption in himself, and then, worshiping this ideal of his own, he becomes the more corrupt through copying that corruption. He makes his god in his own image and likeness, the essence and concentration of his own bad passions, and then conforms himself to the likeness, not of God, but of what was most evil in himself. Thus the Heathen made gods of lust, cruelty, thirst for war; and the worship of corrupt gods reacted on themselves. They forgot that they were the work of their own hands, the conception of their own minds, and professed to "do gladly" "what so great gods" had done.

And more widely, says a father,² "what a man's love is, that he is. Lovest thou earth? thou art earth. Lovest thou God? What shall I say? thou shalt be god."³ "Naught else maketh good or evil actions, save good or evil affections." Love has a transforming power over the soul, which the intellect has not. "He who serveth an abomination is himself an abomination," is a thoughtful Jewish saying. "The intellect brings home to the soul the knowledge on which it worketh, impresses it on itself, incorporates it with itself. Love is an impulse whereby he who loves is borne forth towards that which he loves, is united with it, and is transformed into it." Thus in explaining the words, *Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Mouth*,⁴ the fathers say, "Then the Word of God kisseth us, when He enlighteneth our heart with the Spirit of Divine knowledge, and the soul cleaveth to Him and His Spirit is transfused into him."

11. *As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away, like a bird.* Ephraim had parted with God, his true Glory. In turn, God would quickly take from him all created glory, all which he counted glory, or in which he gloried. When man parts with the substance, his true honor, God takes away the shadow, lest he should content himself therewith,

from the womb, and from the conception.

Before
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12 "Though they bring" • Job 27. 14.

and not see his shame, and, boasting himself to be something, abide in his nothingness and poverty and shame to which he had reduced himself. *Fruitfulness*, and consequent strength, had been God's especial promise to Ephraim. His name, Ephraim, contained in itself the promise of his future fruitfulness.⁵ With this Jacob had blessed him. He was to be greater than Manasseh, his elder brother, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.⁶ Moses had assigned to him tens of thousands,⁷ while to Manasseh he had promised thousands only. On this blessing Ephraim had presumed, and had made it to feed his pride; so now God, in his justice and mercy, would withdraw it from him. It should make itself wings, and fly away⁸, with the swiftness of a bird, and like a bird, not to return again to the place, whence it has been scared.

From the birth. Their children were to perish at every stage in which they received life. This sentence pursued them back to the very beginning of life. First, when their parents should have joy in their birth, they were to come into the world only to go out of it; then, their mother's womb was to be itself their grave; then, stricken with barrenness, the womb itself was to refuse to conceive them.

"The glory of Ephraim passes away, from the birth, the womb, the conception, when the mind which before was, for glory, half-deified, receives, through the just judgment of God, ill report for good report, misery for glory, hatred for favor, contempt for reverence, loss for gain, famine for abundance. Act is the birth; intention the womb; thought the conception. The glory of Ephraim then flies away from the birth, the womb, the conception, when, in those who before did outwardly live nobly, and gloried in themselves for the outward propriety of their life, the acts are disgraced, the intention corrupted, the thoughts defiled."

12. *Though they bring up children.* God had threatened to deprive them of children, in every stage before or at their birth. Now, beyond this, he tells them, as to those who should escape this sentence, he would bereave them of them, or make them childless.

That there shall not be a man left; lit. from man. The brief word may be filled up, as the E. V. has done, (by an idiom not infrequent) 1) "from there being a man;" or

¹ Pa. cxv. 8.

² Iap. from Aq.

³ Ter. Eun.

⁴ 8. Aug. in Ep. 8. Joh. Tr. ii.

⁵ 8. Aug. Ep. 153. ad Macedon. § 13. amores, mores; amours, mœurs.

⁶ Kimehl, MS. in Poc.

⁷ Cant. i. 2.

⁸ 8. Ambr. de Isaac. c. 3. Lap.

⁹ Gen. xli. 52.

¹⁰ 10. xlviii. 19.

¹¹ Deut. xxxiii. 17.

¹² Prov. xxiii. 5.

¹³ Julian. Tolet. in Nah. Lap.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 760.
up their children, yet ^a will
I bereave them, *that there*
shall not be a man left:
yea, ^c woe also to them when
I ^d depart from them!

^a Deut. 28. 41, 62.
^b Deut. 31. 17.
^c 2 Kgs. 17. 18.
^d ch. 5. 6.
^e See 1 Sam. 28. 15, 16.

2) from among men; as Samuel said to Agag¹, as thy sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women; or 3) from becoming men, i. e. from reaching man's estate. The Prophet, in any case, does not mean absolute excision, for he says, *they shall be wanderers among the nations*, and had foretold, that they should abide, as they now are, and be converted in the end. But since their pride was in their numbers, he says, that these should be reduced in every stage from conception to ripened manhood. So God had forewarned Israel in the law², *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law,—ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude.* A sentence, felt the more by Ephraim, as being the head of the most powerful division of the people, and himself the largest portion of it.

Yea, [lit. for] *woe also unto them, when I depart from them.* This is, at once, the ground and the completion of their misery, its beginning and its end. God's departure was the source of all evil to them; as He foretold them³, *I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they shall say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?* But His departure was itself above all. For the Prophet says also; *for woe also unto them.* This was the last step in the scale of misery. Beyond the loss of the children, whom they hoped or longed for, beyond the loss of their present might, and all their hope to come, there is a further undefined, unlimited, evil, *woe to them also*, when God should withdraw, not His care and Providence only, but Himself also from them; *when I depart from them.* They had departed and turned away, from or against God⁴. It had been their characteristic⁵. Now God Himself would requite them, as they had requited Him. He would depart from them. This is the last state of privation, which forms the "punishment of loss" in Hell. When the soul has lost God, what has it?

13. Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place; or (better) as I saw (her)

13 Ephraim, ^a as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: ^b but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 760.
^a See Ezek. 26, & 27, & 28.
^b ver. 16, ch. 13. 16.

towards Tyre, or as I saw as to Tyre. Ephraim stretched out, in her dependent tribes, towards or to Tyre itself. Like to Tyrus she was, "in her riches, her glory, her pleasantness, her strength, her pride," and in the end, her fall. The picture is that of a fair tree, not chance-sown, but planted carefully by hand in a pleasant place⁶. Beauty and strength were blended in her. On the tribe of Joseph especially, Moses had pronounced the blessing⁷; *Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep which coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moons (i. e. month by month) and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills and for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, and for the good pleasure of Him who dwelt in the bush.* Beautiful are the mountains of Ephraim, and the rich valleys or plains which break them. And chief in beauty and in strength was the valley, whose central hill its capital, Samaria, crowned; *the crown of pride to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower which is on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine*⁸. The blessing of Moses pointed perhaps to the time when Shiloh was the tabernacle of Him, Who once dwelt and revealed Himself in the Bush. Now that it had exchanged its God for the calves, the blessings which it still retained, stood but in the more awful contrast with its future.

But Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer; lit. and Ephraim is to bring forth &c. i. e. proud though her wealth, and high her state, pleasantly situated and firmly rooted, one thing lay before her, one destiny, she was to bring forth children only for the murderer. Childlessness in God's Providence is the appropriate and frequent punishment of sins of the flesh. Pride too brought Peninnah, the adversary of Hannah, low, even as to that which was the ground of her pride, her children. ⁹ *The barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.* So as to the soul, "pride deprives of grace."

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 33. כְּנָשִׁים, as here נָשִׁים. add Prov. xxx. 14. ² Deut. xxviii. 58, 62. ³ Ib. xxxi. 17.

⁴ See on vii. 13.

⁵ Hos. iv. 16. The word in each place, is virtually the same, כָּזָב, written here שָׁוִי, and כָּזָב.

⁶ שָׁתַל is always used of planting with choice of

situation. See Ezek. xviii. 8, 22, 23. xix. 10 and in a bad soil, of set purpose, Ib. 13. See Jer. xvii. 8. Ps. i. 3. and in a figure, *They who are planted in the house of the Lord*, Ps. xcii. 14.

⁷ Deut. xxxiii. 13-16.

⁸ Is. xxviii. 1.

⁹ 1 Sam. ii. 5.

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14 Give them, O LORD:
what wilt thou give? give
them¹ a †miscarrying
womb and dry breasts.

¹ Luke 23. 29.
† Heb. *that*
casteth the
fruit.

² ch. 4. 15.
& 12. 11.

³ ch. 1. 6.

15 All their wickedness
is in Gilgal: for there I
hated them: ⁴for the wick-

14. Give them a miscarrying womb. The Prophet prays for Israel, and debates with himself what he can ask for, amid this their determined wickedness, and God's judgments. Since Ephraim was to bring forth children to the murderer, then it was mercy to ask for them, that they might have no children. Since such are the evils which await their children, grant them, O Lord, as a blessing, the sorrows of barrenness. What God had before pronounced as a punishment, should, as compared to other evils, be a mercy, and an object of prayer. So our Lord pronounces as to the destruction of Jerusalem¹. Behold the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck. "O unhappy fruitfulness and fruitful unhappiness, compared with which, barrenness, which among them was accounted a curse, became blessedness."

15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal. Gilgal, having been the scene of so many of God's mercies, had been, on that very ground, chosen as a popular scene for idol-worship². And doubtless, Ephraim still deceived himself, and thought that his idolatrous worship, in a place once so hallowed, would still be acceptable with God. "There, where God of old was propitious, He would be so still, and whatever they did, should, even for the place's sake, be accepted; the hallowed place would necessarily sanctify it." In answer to such thoughts, God says, all their wickedness, the very chief and sum, the head from which the rest flowed, their desertion of God Himself, whatever they hoped or imagined, all their wickedness is there.

For there I hated them. "There, in the very place where heretofore I shewed such great tokens of love to, and by My gracious presence with, them, even there I have hated them and now hate them." He saith not, there was I angry, or displeased with them, but in a word betokening the greatest indignation, I hated them. Great must needs be that wickedness which provoked the Father of mercies to so great displeasure as to say, that He hated them; and severe must needs be those judgments which are as effects of hatred and utter aversion of them, in Him."

For the wickedness of their doings. The sin

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 29. ² ab. iv. 15. ³ See ab. viii. 1.

edness of their doings I will
drive them out of mine
house, I will love them no
more: ⁵all their princes
are revolvers.

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⁶ Is. 1. 23.

16 Ephraim is smitten,
their root is dried up, they

of Israel was no common sin, not a sin of ignorance, but against the full light. Each word betokens evil. The word *doings* expresses great bold doings. It was the wickedness of their wicked works, a deeper depth of wickedness in their wickedness, an essence of wickedness, for which, God saith, I will drive them out of My house, i.e. as before, out of His whole land³.

I will love them no more. So He saith, in the beginning⁴; I will have no more mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away. ⁵This was a national judgment, and so involved the whole of them, as to their outward condition, which they enjoyed as members of that nation, and making up one body politic. It did not respect the spiritual condition of single persons, and their relation, in this respect, to God. As individuals, they were, "not cut off from God's favor and tokens of His love, nor from the power of becoming members of Christ, whenever any of them should come to Him. It only struck them for ever out of that house of the Lord from which they were then driven," or from hopes that that kingdom should be restored, which God said, He would cause to cease.

All their princes are revolvers. Their case then was utterly hopeless. No one of their kings departed from the sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin. The political power which should protect goodness, became the fountain of corruption. ⁶None is there, to rebuke them that offend, to recall those that err; no one who, by his own goodness, and virtue, pacifying God, can turn away His wrath, as there was in the time of Moses. ⁷Askest thou, why God cast them out of His house, why they were not received in the Church or the house of God? He saith to them, because they are all revolvers, departers, i.e. because, before they were cast out visibly in the body, they departed in mind, were far away in heart, and therefore were cast out in the body also, and lost, what alone they loved, the temporal advantages of the house of God."

16. Ephraim is smitten. The Prophet, under the image of a tree, repeats the same sentence of God upon Israel. The word *smitten* is used of the smiting of the tree from above, especially by the visitation of God, as by blasting and mildew⁸. Yet such smiting, although it

⁴ i. g. ⁵ Poc. ⁶ S. Cyr. ⁷ Rup. ⁸ Am. iv. 9.

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shall bear no fruit: yea,
though they bring forth,
yet will I slay *even* † the
beloved fruit of their
womb.

ver. 13.
† Heb. the
desires.
Ezek. 24. 21.

falls heavily for the time, leaves hope for the future. He adds then, *their root is also withered*, so that *they should bear no fruit*; or if, perchance, while the root was still drying up and not quite dead, any fruit be yet found, *yet will I slay*, God says, *the beloved*, fruit of *their womb*, the desired fruit of their bodies, that which their souls longed for. "So long as they have children, and multiply the fruit of the womb, they think that they bear fruit, they deem not that *their root is dried*, or that they have been severed by the axe of excision, and *rooted out of the land of the living*; but, in the anguish at the *slaying* of those they most loved, they shall say, better had it been to have had no children."

17. *My God hath cast them away. My God* (he saith) as if God were his God only who clave to him, not their's who had, by their disobedience, departed from Him. *My God.* "He had then authority from Him," Whom he owned and Who owned him, and Who bade him so speak, as though God were his God, and no longer their's. *God casts them away*, lit. *despises them*, and so rejects them as an object of aversion to Him, *because they did not hearken to him*. "God never forsakes unless He be first forsaken." When they would not hearken, neither doing what God commanded, nor abstaining from what He forbade, God at last rejected them, as worthless, wanting altogether to that end for which He created them.

And they shall be wanderers among the nations. This was the sentence of Cain¹; a *fugitive and a vagabond shall thou be in the earth*. So God had forewarned them². *The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth—and among these nations shall thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest.*

The words of the Prophet imply an abiding condition. He does not say, *they shall wander*, but, *they shall be wanderers*³. Such was to be

¹ Rup. ² Gen. iv. 12. The word נָדָד or נָדָד occurs in both. ³ Deut. xxviii. 64, 5.

⁴ Not נָדָד, but נִדְּרִים בְּנִדְּרִים, נִדְּרִים.

⁵ This appears both from the sculptures of Nineveh in which multitudes of workmen, of countenance and form distinct from the Assyrians, are represented as working in chains, and from the inscriptions of the kings. "I [Sennacherib] carried off into captivity a great number of workmen. All the young active men of Chaldea and Aramea, Manna, &c. who had refused to submit to my government, I carried them all away, to make bricks for me." (Bellino Cylinder in Fox Talbot's Assyrian Texts, p. 9.) "I carried them off as slaves, and compelled

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17 My God will cast
them away, because they
did not hearken unto him:
and they shall be °wander-
ers among the nations.

Deut. 28.
64, 65.

their lot; such has been their lot ever since; and such was not the ordinary lot of those large populations whom Eastern conquerors transported from their own land. Those conquerors took away with them into their own land, portions of the people whom they conquered, for two ends. When a people often rebelled, they were placed where they could rebel no more, among tribes more powerful than they, and obedient to the rule of the conqueror. Or they were carried off, as slaves to work in bricks, like Israel in Egypt⁴. Their workmen, smiths, artificers, were especially taken to labor on those gigantic works, the palaces and temples of Nineveh or Babylon. But, for both these purposes, the transported population had a settled abode allotted to it, whether in the capital or the provinces. Sometimes new cities or villages were built for the settlers⁵. Israel at first was so located. Perhaps on account of the frequent rebellions of their kings, the ten tribes were placed amid a wild, warlike, population, in the cities of the Medes⁶. When the interior of Asia was less known, people thought that they were still to be found there. The Jews fabled, that the ten tribes lay behind some mighty and fabulous river, Sambatyon⁷, or were fenced in by mountains⁸. Christians thought that they might be found in some yet unexplored part of Asia. Undeceived as to this, they still asked whether the Afghans, or the Yezides, or the natives of North America were the ten tribes, or whether they were the Nestorians of Kurdistan. So natural did it seem, that they, like other nations so transported, should remain as a body, near or at the places, where they had been located by their conquerors. The Prophet says otherwise. He says their abiding condition shall be, *they shall be wanderers among the nations*, wanderers among them, but no part of them. Before the final dispersion of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem,

them to make bricks for me." (Cyl. of Esarhad. Ib. p. 17.) "By the labor of foreign slaves, my captives, who lifted up their hands in the name of the great gods, my lords, I built thirty temples in Assyria and in—" (Ib. p. 16.)

⁶ "A city I built. City of Esarhaddon I called it. Men who were—, natives of the land of [Caramania?] and of the sea of the rising sun, in that city I caused to dwell. I appointed my secretaries to be magistrates over them." (Cyl. of Esarh. Ib. p. 11. et al.)

⁷ 2 Kings xvii. 6. ⁸ Jon. in Ex. xxxiv. 14. ⁹ Perissol Orchot Olam. c. 4. 9. quoted by Basnage, Hist. d. Juifs. vi. 3. 3.

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CHAPTER X.

*Israel is reprov'd and threaten'd
for their impiety and idolatry.*

* Nah. 2. 2.
† Or, a vine
emptying the
fruit which it
giveth.

ISRAEL is *|| an empty
vine, he bringeth forth
fruit unto himself: accord-

ing to the multitude of his
fruit ^b he hath increased
the altars; according to
the goodness of his land
* they have made goodly
† images.

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^b ch. 8. 11.
& 12. 11.
* ch. 8. 4.
† Heb. statues,
or, standing
images.

"the Jewish race," Josephus says ¹, "was in great numbers through the whole world, interspersed with the nations." Those assembled at the day of Pentecost had come from all parts of Asia Minor but also from Parthia, Media, Persia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt, maritime Lybia, Crete, and Italy ². Wherever the Apostles went, in Asia or Greece, they found Jews, in numbers sufficient to raise persecution against them. S. James writes to those whom, with a word corresponding to that of Hosea, he calls, "the dispersion." ³ James—to the twelve in the dispersion. The Jews, scoffing, asked, whether our Lord would go to the dispersion among the Greeks ⁴. They speak of it, as a body, over against themselves, to whom they supposed that He meant to go, to teach them, when He said, *Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me*. The Jews of Egypt were probably the descendants of those who went thither, after the murder of Gedaliah. The Jews of the North, as well as those of China, India, Russia, were probably descendants of the ten tribes. From one end of Asia to the other and onward through the Crimea, Greece and Italy, the Jews by their presence, bare witness to the fulfillment of the prophecy. Not like the wandering Indian tribe, who spread over Europe, living apart in their native wildness, but settled, among the inhabitants of each city, they were still distinct, although with no polity of their own; a distinct, settled, yet foreign and subordinate race. ⁵ Still remains unreversed this irrevocable sentence, as to their temporal state and face of an earthly kingdom, that they remain still wanderers or dispersed among other nations, and have never been restored, nor are in likelihood of ever being restored to their own land, so as to call it their own. If ever any of them hath returned thither, it hath been but as strangers, and all, as to any propriety that they should challenge in it, to hear the ruins and waste heaps of their ancient cities to echo in their ears the Prophet's words, ⁶ *Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest; your ancestors polluted it, and ye shall never return as a people thither, to inhabit it, as in your former condition.*

"Meanwhile Ephraim here is an example,

not only to particular persons, that as they will avoid personal judgments, so they take care faithfully to serve God and hearken unto Him; but to nations and kingdoms also, that as they will prevent national judgments, so they take care that God be truly served, and the true religion maintained in purity and sincerity among them. Ephraim, or Israel, held their land by as good and firm tenure as any people in the world can theirs, having it settled on them by immediate gift from Him Who is the Lord of the whole earth, Who promised it to their forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever ⁷, called therefore the land which the Lord swore unto them ⁸; and which He had promised them ⁹, the land of Promise ¹⁰. Who could have greater right to a place, better and firmer right, than they had to the Lord's land, by His promise which never fails, and His oath Who will not repent, confirmed to them? Certainly, if they had observed conditions and kept covenant with Him, all the people in the world could never have driven them out, or dispossessed them of it. But, seeing they revolted and brake His covenant, and did not hearken to Him, He would not suffer them longer to dwell in it, but drove and cast them out of it, so that they could never recover it again, but continue to this day wandering among the nations, having no settled place of their own, nowhere where they can be called a people, or are for such owned. If God so dealt with Israel on their disobedience and departing from His service, to whom He had so particularly engaged himself to make good to them the firm possession of that land; how shall any presume on any right or title to any other, or think to preserve it to themselves by any force or strength of their own, if they revolt from Him, and cast off thankful obedience to Him? The Apostle cautioneth and teacheth us so to argue, *if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee*, and therefore warneth, *be not high-minded, and presumptuous, but fear* ¹¹."

X. 1. *Israel is an empty vine*, or, in the same sense, *a luxuriant vine*; lit. *one which poureth out*, poureth itself out into leaves, abundant in switches, (as most old versions explain it,) luxuriant in leaves, emptying itself in them,

¹ de B. J. vii. 33.

² ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ, S. James I. 1.

³ διασποράν, S. John vii. 35.

⁴ Acts ii. 9-11.

⁵ Poc.

⁶ Mic. ii. 10.

⁷ Num. xiv.

⁸ Heb. xl. 9.

⁹ Gen. xiii. 14. 15. Deut. xxxiv. 4.

¹⁰ Deut. ix. 28.

¹¹ Rom. xi. 20, 21.

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2 || Their heart is ^adivided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall

¹Or, *He hath divided their heart.*

^a1 Kgs. 18. 21. Matt. 6. 24.

and empty of fruit; like the fig-tree, which our Lord cursed. For the more a fruit tree putteth out its strength in leaves and branches, the less and the worst fruit it beareth. "The juices which it ought to transmute into wine, it disperseth in the ambitious idle shew of leaves and branches." The sap in the vine is an emblem of His Holy Spirit, through Whom alone we can bear fruit. *His grace which was in me*, says St. Paul, *was not in vain*. It is in vain to us, when we waste the stirrings of God's Spirit in feelings, aspirations, longings, transports, "which bloom their hour and fade." Like the leaves, these feelings aid in maturing fruit; when there are leaves only, the tree is barren and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.³

It bringeth forth fruit for itself, lit. *setteth fruit to, or on itself*. Luxuriant in leaves, its fruit becomes worthless, and is from itself to itself. It is uncultured; (for Israel refused culture,) pouring itself out, as it willed, in what it willed. It had a rich shew of leaves, a shew also of fruit, but not for the Lord of the vineyard, since they came to no size or ripeness. Yet to the superficial glance, it was rich, prosperous, healthy, abundant in all things, as was the outward state of Israel under Jehoshaphat and Jeroboam II.

According to the multitude of his fruit, or more strictly, as his fruit was multiplied, he multiplied altars; as his land was made good, they made goodly their images. The more of outward prosperity God bestowed upon them, the more they abused His gifts, referring them to their idols; the more God lavished His mercies on them, the more profuse they were in adoring their idols. The superabundance of God's goodness became the occasion of the superabundance of their wickedness. They rivalled and competed with, and outdid the goodness of God, so that He could bestow upon them no good, which they did not turn to evil. Men think this strange. Strange it is, as is all perversion of God's goodness; yet so it is now. Men's sins are either the abuse of what God gives, or rebellion, because He withholds. In the sins of prosperity, wealth, health, strength, powers of mind, wit, men sin in a way in which they could not sin, unless God continually supplied them with those gifts which they turn to sin. The more God gives, the more opportunity and ability they have to sin, and the more they

† break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

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† Heb. *behead*.

sin. They are *evil*, not only in despite of God's goodness, but *because* He is good.

2. *Their heart is divided* between God and their idols, in that they would not wholly part with either, as Elijah upbraided them, *How long halt ye between the two opinions?* When the heathen, by whom the king of Assyria replaced them, had been taught by one of the priests whom the king sent back, in order to avert God's judgments, they still propagated this division. Like Jeroboam, ⁵*they became fearers of the Lord*, His worshippers, and made to themselves out of their whole number (i.e. indiscriminately) *priests of the high places*. *They were fearers of the Lord, and they were servers of their gods, according to the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence*.—These nations were fearers of the Lord, and they were servers of their idols, both their children and their children's children. As did their fathers, so do they unto this day. This divided allegiance was their hereditary worship. These heathen, as taught by one of the priests of Israel, added the service of God to that of their idols, as Israel had added the service of the idols to that of God. But God rejecteth such half service; whence he adds, *now*, in a brief time, all but come, *they shall be found faulty*, lit. *they shall be guilty*, shall be convicted of guilt and shall bear it. They thought to serve at once God and Mammon; but, in truth, they served their idols only, whom they would not part with for God. God Himself then would turn away all their worship, bad, and, as they thought, good. *He*, from Whom their heart was divided, He Himself, by His mighty power which no man can gain-say, *shall break down their altars*, lit. *shall behead* them. As they out of His gifts multiplied their altars and slew their sacrifices upon them against His will, so now should the altars themselves be demolished; and the images which they had decked with the gold which He had given, should, on account of that very gold, tempt the spoiler, through whom God would spoil them.

He shall break down. He Himself⁶. The word is emphatic. "God willeth not that, when the merited vengeance of God is inflicted through man, it should be ascribed to man. Yea, if any one ascribeth to himself what, by permission of God, he hath power to do against the people of God, he draweth down on him the displeasure of God, and, at

³ S. Jer. ² Lyra Apost. N. 67. ³ Heb. vi. 8.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 21.

⁵ 2 Kgs. xvii. 32, 33, 41. The form "אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"

expresses that they were habitual worshippers of God.

⁶ אֱלֹהֵי.

⁷ Rup.

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3 *For now they shall
say, We have no king, be-

* ch. 3. 4. & 11. 5. cause we feared not the
Mic. 4. 9. ver. 7.

LORD; what then should a
king do to us?

* See Deut.
29. 18.
Amos 5. 7.
& 6. 12.
Acts 8. 23.
Heb. 12. 15.

4 They have spoken
words, swearing falsely in
making a covenant: thus
judgment springeth up * as

times, on that very ground, can hurt the
less¹. The prophet then says very earn-
estly, *He Himself shall break*, meaning us to
understand, not the lofty hand of the enemy,
but that the Lord Himself did all these
things.

3. *For now they shall say, we have no king.*
These are the words of despair, not of re-
pentance; of men terrified by the conscious-
ness of guilt, but not coming forth out of its
darkness; describing their condition, not
confessing the iniquity which brought it on
them. In sin, all Israel had asked for a
king, when the Lord was their king; in sin,
Ephraim had made Jeroboam king; in sin,
their subsequent kings were made, without
the counsel and advice of God; and now as
the close of all, they reflect how fruitless it
all was. They had a king, and yet, as it
were, they had no king, since, God being
angry with them, he had no strength to de-
liver them. And now, without love, the
memory of their evil deeds crushes them be-
yond hope of remedy. They groan for their
losses, their sufferings, their fears, but do not
repent. Such is the remorse of the damned.
All which they had is lost; and what availed
it now, since, when they had it, they feared
not God?

4. *They have spoken words.* The words
which they spoke were eminently words;
they were mere words, which had no sub-
stance; *swearing falsely in making a covenant,*
lit. *swearing falsely, making a covenant, and*
judgment springeth up as hemlock in the fur-
rows of the field. "There is no truth in
words, no sanctity in oaths, no faithfulness
in keeping covenants, no justice in giving
judgments." Such is the result of all their
oaths and covenants, that *judgment springeth*
up, yea, flourisheth; but, what judgment?
Judgment, bitter and poisonous as hemlock,
flourishes, as hemlock would flourish on
ground broken up and prepared for it. They
break up the ground, make the furrows. They
will not have any chance self-sown seed;
they prepare the soil for harvest, full, abun-
dant, regular, cleared of all besides. And

hemlock in the furrows of
the field.

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5 The inhabitants of Sa-
maria shall fear because of

* the calves of ^a Beth-aven:
for the people thereof shall
mourn over it, and || the
priests thereof that rejoiced
on it, ¹ for the glory thereof,

¹ 1 Kgs. 12.
23. 29.
ch. 8. 5, 6.
ch. 4. 15.
Or, *Chemarim*,
2 Kgs. 23. 5.
Zeph. 1. 4.
1 Sam. 4.
21. 22.
ch. 9. 11.

what harvest? Not any wholesome plant,
but poison. They cultivate injustice and
wickedness, as if these were to be the fruits
to be rendered to God from His own land.
So Amos says², *Ye have turned judgment into*
gall or wormwood, and Habakkuk, *Judgment*
*went forth perverted*³.

5. *The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear be-*
cause of [i. e. for] the calves of Beth-aven. He
calls them in this place *cow-calves*⁴, perhaps
to denote their weakness and helplessness.
So far from their idol being able to help them,
they shall be anxious and troubled for their
idols, lest these should be taken captive from
them. The *Bethel (House of God)* of the
Patriarch Jacob, was now turned into *Beth-*
aven, the house of vanity. This, from its old
sacred memories, was a more celebrated place
of the calf-worship than Dan. Hosea then
gives to the calf of Bethel its precedence,
and ranks both idols under its one name, as
calves of the house of vanity.

For the people thereof shall mourn over it.
They had set up the idols, instead of God;
so God calls them no longer His people, but
the people of the calf whom they had chosen
for their god; as Moab was called ⁵ *the people*
of Chemosh, its idol. They had joyed in it,
not in God; now they, *its people* and its priests,
should *mourn over it*, when unable to help
itself, much less, them. Both their joy and
their sorrow shewed that they were without
excuse, that they had *gone willingly after* the
king's commandment, serving it of their own
free-will out of love, not out of fear of the
king, and, neither out of love or fear, serving
God purely.

For the glory thereof, because it is departed
from it. The true glory of Israel was God;
the Glory of God is in Himself. *The glory*
of the calves, for whom Ephraim had ex-
changed their God, was something quite out-
ward to them, the gold of which they were
made, and the rich offerings made to them.
Both together became an occasion of their
being carried captive. They mourned, not
because they had offended God by their sin,
but for the loss of that dumb idol, whose

¹ See Deut. xxxii. 20, 7. Is. x. 5 sqq. * Osorius.

² vi. 12. v. 7. ³ i. 4. עגלות. ⁴ Num. xxi. 20.

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because it is departed from
it.

6 It shall be also carried
unto Assyria for a
present to ¹king Jareb:
Ephraim shall receive

¹ ch. 5. 13.

worship had been their sin, and which had brought these heavy woes upon them. Impenitent even under chastisement! The Prophet does not mention any grief for "the despoiling of their country, the burning of their cities, the slaughter of their people, their shame!" One only thing he names as moving them. Even then their one chief anxiety was, not that God was departed from them, but that their calf in which they had set their *glory*, whereupon they so frantically relied, on which they had lavished their substance, their national distinction and disgrace, was gone. Without the grace of God men mourn, not their sins, but their idols.

6. *It shall be also carried; [i.e. Itself² also shall be carried.]* Not Israel only shall be carried into captivity, but its god also. The victory over a nation was accounted of old a victory over its gods, as indeed it shewed their impotence. Hence the excuse made by the captains of Benhadad, that the *gods of Israel were gods of the hills, and not gods of the valleys*³, and God's vindication of His own Almightyness, which was thus denied. Hence also the boast of Sennacherib by Rabshakeh, *"have any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?"* When God then, for the sin of His people, gave them into the hand of their enemies, He vindicated His own glory, first by avenging any insult offered to His worship, as in the capture of the ark by the Philistines, or Belshazzar's insolent and drunken abuse of the vessels of the temple; or by vindicating His servants, as in the case of Daniel and the three children, or by chastening pride, as in Nebuchadnezzar, and explaining and pointing His chastisement through His servant Daniel, or by prophecy, as of Cyrus by Isaiah and Daniel. To His own people, His chastisements were the vindication of His glory which they had dishonored, and the close of

¹ from Osor. ² The *itself*, *למנו*, is emphatic.

³ 1 Kgs. xx. 23.

⁴ 2 Kgs. xviii. 33-35. add. xix. 10-13.

⁵ Num. xxi. 29.

⁶ See ab. v. 13.

shame, and Israel shall
be ashamed ¹of his own
counsel.

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¹ ch. 11. 6.

7 ²As for Samaria, her
king is cut off as the foam
upon [†]the water.

² ver. 3. 15.

[†] Heb. *the face
of the water.*

the long strife between the true prophets and the false. The captivity of the calf ended its worship, and was its final disgrace. The destruction of the temple and the captivity of its vessels and of God's people ended, not the worship, but the idolatries of Judah, and extended among their captors, and their captors' captors, the Medes and Persians, the knowledge of the One true God.

Unto Assyria, for a present to king Jareb or to a hostile or strifeful³ king. Perhaps the name *Jareb* designates the Assyrian by that which was a characteristic of their empire, love of *strife*. The history of their kings, as given by themselves in the newly-found inscriptions, is one warfare. To that same king, to whom they sent for aid in their weakness, from whom they hoped for help, and whom God named as what He knew and willed him to be to them, *hostile, strifeful, and an avenger*, should the object of their idolatry be carried in triumph⁴. They had trusted in the calf and in the Assyrians. The Assyrian, to whom they looked as the protector of their liberties, was to carry away their other trust, their god⁵.

Ephraim shall receive shame. This shall be all his gain; this his purchase; this he had obtained for himself by his pride and wilfulness and idolatry and ambition and wars: this is the end of all, as it is of all pursuits apart from God; this he *shall receive* from the Giver of all good, *shame*. And *Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel*. Ephraim's special counsel was that which Jeroboam took with the most worldly-wise of his people, a counsel which admirably served their immediate end, the establishment of a kingdom, separate from that of Judah. It was acutely devised; it seemed to answer its end for 230 years, so that Israel, until the latter part of the reign of Pekah, was strong, Judah, in comparison, weak. But it was the *sin where-with he made Israel to sin*, and for which God scattered him among the heathen. His wisdom became his destruction and his shame. The policy which was to establish his family and his kingdom, destroyed his own family in the next generation, and ultimately, his people, not by its failure, but by its success.

7. *Her king is cut off like foam* (or, more

¹ ירוב is used of solemn stately processions, as of a royal bride, Pa. xiv. 15, 16; or a burial, Job x. 10. xxi. 30, 32, and so of the lengthened train of presents, Pa. lxxviii. 30.

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* ch. 4. 15.
• Deut. 9. 21.
1 Kgs. 12. 30.
† ch. 9. 6.

8 ^a The high places also
of Aven, ^b the sin of Israel,
shall be destroyed: ^c the
thorn and the thistle shall

come up on their altars;
^d and they shall say to the
mountains, Cover us; and
to the hills, Fall on us.

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* Is. 2. 19.
Luke 33. 30.
Rev. 6. 16.
† 9. 6.

probably, ¹ a straw on the [lit. face of the] water. A bubble, or one of those little shreds which float in countless numbers on the surface of the water, give the same image of lightness, emptiness, worthlessness, a thing too light to sink, but driven impetuously, and unresistingly, hither and thither, at the impulse of the torrent which hurries it along. Such was the king, whom Israel had set in the highest place, in whom it had trusted, instead of God. So easily was Hoshea, their last king, swept away by the flood, which broke in on Ephraim, from Assyria. Piety is the only solidity; apart from piety all is emptiness.

8. *The high places of Aven*, i.e. of vanity or iniquity. He had before called *Bethel*, house of God, by the name of *Bethaven*, house of vanity; now he calls it *Aven*, vanity or iniquity, as being the concentration of those qualities. Bethel was situated on a hill, the mount of Bethel, and, from different sides, people were said to go up ² to it. *The high place* often means the shrine, or the house of the high places. Jeroboam had built such at Bethel ³; many such already existed in his time, so that, *whoever would, he consecrated as their priests* ⁴. The high-place or shrine, is accordingly said to be built ⁵, broken down and burnt ⁶. At times, they were tents, and so said to be woven ⁷, made of garments of divers colors ⁸. The calf then, probably, became a centre of idolatry; many such idol-shrines were formed around it, on its mount, until Bethel became a metropolis of idolatry. This was the sin of Israel, as being the source of all its sins.

The thorn and the thistle shall come up upon their altars. This pictures, not only the desolation of the place, as before ⁹, but the forced cessation of idolatry. Fire destroys, down to the root, all vegetable life which it has once touched. The thorn, once blackened by fire, puts out no fresh shoot. But now, these idol fires having been put out for ever, from amid the crevices of the broken altars, *thorn and thistle* ¹⁰ should grow freely as in a fallow soil. Where the victims aforetime went up ¹¹, or were offered, now the wild briars and thistles alone should go up, and wave freely in undis-

puted possession. Ephraim had multiplied altars, as God multiplied their goods; now their altars should be but monuments of the defeat of idolatry. They remained, but only as the grave-stones of the idols, once worshipped there.

They shall say to the mountains, cover us. Samaria and Bethel, the seats of the idolatry and of the kingdom of Israel, themselves both on heights, had both, near them, mountains higher than themselves. Such was to Bethel, the mountain on the East, where Abraham built an altar to the Lord ¹²; Samaria was encircled by them. Both were probably scenes of their idolatries; from both, the miseries of the dwellers of Bethel and Samaria could be seen. Samaria especially was in the centre of a sort of amphitheatre; itself, the spectacle. No help should those high places now bring to them in their need. The high hills round Samaria, when the tide of war had filled the valley around it, hemmed them in, the more hopelessly. There was no way, either to break through or to escape. The narrow passes, which might have been held, as flood gates against the enemy, would then be held against them. One only service could it seem, that their mountains could then render, to destroy them. So should they be freed from evils worse than the death of the body, and escape the gaze of men upon their misery. "They shall wish rather to die, than to see what will bring death." "They shall say to the mountains on which they worshipped idols, fall on us, and anticipate the cruelty of the Assyrians and the extreme misery of captivity." Nature abhors annihilation; man shrinks from the violent marring of his outward form; he clings, however debased, to the form which God gave him. What misery, then, when men long for, what their inmost being shrinks from!

The words of the Prophet become a sort of proverbial saying for misery, which longs for death rather than life. The destruction of Samaria was the type of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and of every other final excision, when the measure of iniquity was filled, and there was neither

¹ From the use of קצץ "shredding," Joel i. 7. and the Arab.

² Josh. xvi. 1. 1 Sam. xlii. 2. ab. iv. 13. Gen. xxxv.

1. Judg. i. 22. 1 Sam. x. 3. 2 Kgs. ii. 23.

³ 1 Kgs. xlii. 31. ⁴ Ib. xlii. 32, 33. ⁵ Ib. xi. 7.

⁶ 2 Kgs. xxiii. 15. ⁷ Ib. 7.

⁸ Ezek. xvi. 16. ⁹ ch. ix. 6.

¹⁰ These same two plants are named together in the cursing of the ground for Adam's sin (Gen. iii.

18.) and there alone does the word, translated *thistle*, occur. Hosea, probably, was using the words of Genesis, in that, as a sort of proverb, he joins these two, out of sixteen names of the class of plant which occur in the Old Testament.

¹¹ עולה (whence עולה whole burnt offering, lit. that which goeth up) is also a sacrificial term.

¹² Gen. xii. 8.

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* ch. 9. 9.

* See Judg. 20.

9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: *the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

hope nor remedy. This was the characteristic of the destruction of Samaria. They had been God's people; they were to be so no more. This was the characteristic of the destruction of Jerusalem, not by the Babylonians, after which it was restored, but by the Romans, when they had rejected Christ, and prayed, *His Blood be on us and on our children*. So will it be in the end of the world. Hence our Lord uses the words¹, to forewarn of the miseries of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Jews hid themselves in caves for fear of the Romans²; and S. John uses them to picture man's despair at the end of the world³. "I dread" says S. Bernard⁴, "the gnawing worm, and the living death. I dread to fall into the hands of a living death, and a dying life. This is the second death, which never out-killeth, yet which ever killeth. How would they long to die once, that they may not die for ever! *They who say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us, what do they will, but, by the aid of death, either to escape or to end death? They shall seek death, but shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them*, saith S. John⁵."

9. O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah. There must have been great sin, on both sides, of Israel as well as Benjamin, when Israel punished the atrocity of Gibeah, since God caused Israel so to be smitten before Benjamin. Such sin had continued ever since, so that, although God, in His long-suffering, had hitherto spared them, "it was not of late only that they had deserved those judgments, although now at last only, God inflicted them." *There in Gibeah, they stood. Although smitten twice at Gibeah, and heavily chastened, there they were avengers of the sacredness of God's law, and, in the end, they stood; chastened but not killed. But now, none of the ten tribes took the side of God. Neither zeal for God, nor the greatness of the guilt, nor fear of judgment, nor the peril of utter ruin, induced any to set themselves against sin so great. The sin devised by one, diffused among the many, was burnt and branded into them, so that they never parted with it*⁶. *The battle in Gibeah*

10 *It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and "the people shall be gathered against them, || when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.*

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* Deut. 28. 63.
Jer. 16. 16.
Ezek. 23. 46.
47. ch. 8. 10.
Or, when I shall bind them for their two transgressions, or, in their two habitations.

against the children of iniquity did not overtake them, i.e. it did not overtake them then, but it shall overtake them now. Or if we render, (as is more probable,) shall not overtake them, it will mean, not a battle like that in Gibeah, terrible as that was, shall now overtake them; but one far worse. For, although the tribe of Benjamin was then reduced to six hundred men, yet the tribe still survived and flourished again; now the kingdom of the ten tribes, and the name of Ephraim, should be utterly blotted out.

10. *It is in My desire that I should chastise them. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*⁷. Grievous then must be the cause of punishment, when God not only chastens men, but, so to speak, longs to chasten them, when He chastens them without any let or hindrance from His mercy. Yet so God had said⁸; *It shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and to bring you to nought*. God willed to enforce His justice, with no reserve whatever from His mercy. His whole mind, so to speak, is to punish them. God is "without passions." Yet, in order to impress on us the truth, that one day there will, to some, be judgment without mercy⁹. He speaks as one, whose longing could not be satisfied, until the punishment were executed. So He says¹⁰, *I will ease Me of Mine adversaries*; ¹¹ *Mine anger shall be accomplished and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted.*

And the people shall be gathered against him. "As all the other tribes were gathered against Benjamin at Gibeah to destroy it, so, although that war did not overtake them, now against him, i.e. against Ephraim or the ten tribes, shall be gathered divers peoples and nations, to destroy them." The number gathered against them shall be as overwhelming, as that of all the tribes of Israel against the one small tribe of Benjamin. "As of old, they ought to have bound themselves to extinguish this apostacy in its birth, as they bound themselves to avenge the horrible wickedness at Gibeah. But since they bound themselves not against sin, but to it, God says

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 30.

² Jos. de B. J. vi. 9.

³ Rev. vi. 10.

⁴ De consid. v. 12.

⁵ Rev. ix. 6.

⁶ Osor.

⁷ Lam. iii. 33.

⁸ Dent. xxviii. 63.

⁹ S. James ii. 13.

¹⁰ Is. i. 24.

¹¹ Ezek. v. 13.

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11 And Ephraim is as
* an heifer that is taught,
and loveth to tread out the
corn; but I passed over

* Jer. 50. 11.
Mic. 4. 13.

that He would gather Heathen nations against them, to punish their obstinate rebellion against Himself. They who will neither be drawn by piety, nor corrected by moderate chastisements, must needs be visited by sharper punishments, that some, who will not strive to the uttermost against the mercy of God, may be saved."

When they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. They bind themselves and Satan binds them to their sin. In harmony and unity in nothing else, they will bind themselves, and plough like two oxen together, adding furrow to furrow, joining on line to line of sin. They who had thrown off the light and easy yoke of God, who were ever like a restive, untamed, heifer, starting aside from the yoke, would bind and band themselves steadily in their own ways of sin, cultivating sin, and in that sin should destruction overtake them. Men who are unsteady and uneven in every thing besides, will be steadfast in pursuing sin; they who will submit to no constraint, human or Divine, will, in their slavery to their passions, submit to anything. No slavery is so heavy as that which is self-imposed.

This translation has followed an old Jewish tradition, expressed by the vowels of the text,¹ and old Jewish authorities. With other vowels, it may be rendered, lit. in their binding to their two transgressions, which gives the same sense, "because they bound themselves to their two transgressions," or, passively, when they are bound, on account of their two transgressions. The two transgressions, may designate the two calves, the sin of Israel, or the twofold guilt of fornication, spiritual, and in the body; the breach of both tables of God's law; or as Jeremiah says², My people hath committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water. ³This could not be said of any other nation, which knew not God. For if any such worshiped false gods, they committed only one transgression; but this nation, in which God was known, by declining to idolatry, is truly blamed as guilty of two transgressions; they left the true God, and for, or against, Him they worshipped other gods. For he hath twofold guilt, who, knowing

¹ In that they have pointed עֵינוֹתָם not עֵינֵיהֶם, iniquities. Another rendering before their two eyes, is altogether wrong. 1. It would, at least, be, עֵינֵיהֶם, not עֵינוֹתָם, which means their fountains.
² There is probably no such reading as עֵינוֹתָם,

upon † her fair neck: I will
make Ephraim to ride;
Judah shall plow, and †
Jacob shall break his clods.

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† Heb. the beauty
of her neck.

good, rather chooseth evil; but he single, who, knowing no good, taketh evil for good. That nation then, both when, after seeing many wonderful works of God, it made and worshiped one calf in the wilderness; and when, forsaking the house of David and the temple of the Lord, it made itself two calves; yea, and so often as it worshipped those gods of the heathen; and yet more, when it asked that Barabbas should be released but that Christ should be crucified, committed two transgressions, rejecting the good, electing the evil; ⁴setting sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet; ⁵setting darkness as light, and light as darkness."

11. Ephraim is an heifer that is taught and loveth to tread out the corn. The object of the metaphor in these three verses seems to be, to picture, under operations of husbandry, what God willed and trained His people to do, how they took as much pains in evil, as He willed them to do for good. One thing only they did which He willed, but not because He willed it,—what pleased themselves. Corn was threshed in the East chiefly by means of oxen, who were either driven round and round, so as to trample it out with their feet, or drew a cylinder armed with iron, or harrow-shaped planks, set with sharp stones which at the same time cut up the straw for provender. The treading out the corn was an easy and luxurious service, since God had forbidden to muzzle the ox⁶, while doing it. It pictures then the sweet gentle ways by which God wins us to His service. Israel would serve thus far; for she liked the service, she was accustomed to it, and she loved it, but she would do no more. She waxed fat and kicked⁷.

⁸The heifer when accustomed to the labor of treading out the corn, mostly, even unconstrained, returns to the same labor. So the mind of the ungodly, devoted to the slaveries of this world, and accustomed to the fatigues of temporal things, even if it may have leisure for itself, hastens to subject itself to earthly toils, and, inured to its miserable conversation, seeks the renewal of toil, and will not, though it may, cease from the yoke of this world's slavery. This yoke our Lord would remove from the necks of His disciples, saying⁹, Take heed, lest at any

the merely indicating a reading עֵינוֹתָם without 1. Hüller. Arc. Cethib. p. 233.

² Il. 13.

³ Rup.

⁴ Is. v. 20.

⁵ Deut. xxv. 4.

⁶ Ib. xxxii. 15.

⁷ S. Greg. Mor. xx. 16. Rib.

⁸ S. Luke xxi. 34.

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12 'Sow to yourselves in
righteousness, reap in

* Prov. 11. 18.

time your hearts be overcharged with cares of this life, and that Day come upon you unawares. And again, *Come unto Me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon you.*" "1 Some, in order to appear sonewhat in this world, overload themselves with earthly toils, and although, amid their labors, they feel their strength fail, yet, overcome by love of earthly things, they delight in their fatigue. To these it is said by the Prophet, *Ephraim is a heifer taught and loving to tread out the corn.* They ask that they may be oppressed; in rest, they deem that they have lighted unto a great peril."

And I passed over her fair neck, handling her gently and tenderly, as men put the yoke gently on a young untamed animal, and inure it softly to take the yoke upon it. Yet "2 to pass over, especially when it is said of God, always signifies inflictions and troubles." To pass over sins, is to remit them; to pass over the sinner, is to punish him. *I will make Ephraim to ride or I will make it, i. e. the yoke, to ride on Ephraim's neck,* as the same word is used for "3 place the hand on the bow;" or, perhaps better, *I will set a rider on Ephraim,* who should tame and subdue him. Since he would not submit himself freely to the easy yoke of God, God would set a ruler upon him, who should be his master. Thus, the Psalmist complains, *Thou hast made men to ride on our head,* directing us at their pleasure.

"4 The beauty of the neck designates those who sin and take pleasure in their sins. That passing over or ascending, said both in the past and the future, *I passed, I will make to ride,* signifies that what He purposes is most certain. It expresses that same vengeance as, *Ye are a stiffnecked people; I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee.* The beauty of the neck here is the same as the ornament there, when the Lord says, *therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.* As long as the sinner goes adorned, i. e. is proud in his sins, as long as he stiffens his fair neck, self-complacent, taking pleasure in the ills which he has done, God, in a measure, knows not what to do to him; mercy knows not how, apart from the severity of judgment, to approach him; and so after the sentence of the judge, *thou art a stiffnecked people, &c.* He gives the counsel *put off thine ornaments &c.*

mercy; 'break up your
fallow ground: for it

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* Jer. 4. 3.

i. e. humble thyself in penitence, that I may have mercy upon thee."

Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods. In the Will of God, Judah and Israel were to unite in His service, Judah first, Jacob, after him, breaking the clods, which would hinder the seed from shooting up. Judah being mentioned in the same incidental way, as elsewhere by Hosea, it may be, that he would speak of what should follow on Ephraim's chastisement. "7 When they shall see this, the two tribes shall no longer employ themselves in treading out the corn, but shall plow. *To tread out the corn is to*" act "in hope of present gain; to plow, is to labor in that, which has no instant fruit, but promiseth it hereafter, i. e. the fulfillment of God's commands." *Jacob will then be the remnant of the ten tribes, who, at Hezekiah's invitation, out of Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Asher, and Zebulun, joined in celebrating the passover at Jerusalem, and subsequently in destroying idolatry.* Hosea had already foretold that Judah and Israel shall be gathered together, under one Head⁸. Here, again, he unites them in one, preparing His way first in themselves, then, in others. Judah is placed first; for to him was the promise in his forefather, the Patriarch, and then in David. Ephraim was to be partaker of his blessings, by being united to him. The image of the heifer has been dropped. He had spoken of them as husbandmen; as such he addresses them.

12. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; lit. in the proportion of mercy,* not in proportion to what you have sown, nor what justice would give, but beyond all deserts, in the proportion of mercy; i. e. "according to the capacity and fullness of the mercy of God; what becometh the mercy of God, which is boundless," which overlooketh man's failings, and giveth an infinite reward for poor imperfect labor. As our Lord says¹⁰, *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosom.* "11 If the earth giveth thee larger fruits than it has received, how much more shall the requiting of mercy repay thee manifold more than thou gavest!" Sowing and reaping always stand over against each other, as labor and reward. "12 *He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.* And, "13 *whatsoever*

¹ S. Greg. in Ezek. Hom. x. 1b.

² S. Jer. See Job ix. 11. xiii. 13. Ps. lxxxviii. 17. Heb. Is. xxviii. 18.

³ הרכב 2 Kings xiii. 16. twice.

⁴ Ps. lxvi. 12.

⁵ Rup.

⁶ Ex. xxxiii. 5.

⁷ Rib.

⁸ 2 Chron. xxx. xxxi. 9. i. 11.

⁹ S. Luke vi. 38.

¹⁰ S. Ambro. de Naboth, 2. 7. Rib.

¹¹ 2 Cor. ix. 6.

¹² Gal. vi. 7, 8, 9.

Before
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LORD, till he come, and

rain righteousness upon
you. Before
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a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. In due season we shall reap, if we faint not. We are bidden to sow to ourselves, for, ¹our goodness reacheth not to God; our's is the gain, if we love God, the Fountain of all good. This reward, according to mercy, is in both worlds. It is in this world also. For "grace well used draws more grace." God giveth grace upon grace²; so that each good deed, the fruit of grace, is the seed-corn of larger grace. "If thou humble thyself, it stimulates thee to humble thyself more. If thou prayest, thou longest to pray more. If thou givest alms, thou wishest to give more." It is in the world to come. For, says a holy man³, "our works do not pass away as it seems, but each thing done in time, is sown as the seed of eternity. The simple will be amazed, when from this slight seed he shall see the copious harvest arise, good or evil, according as the seed was." "Thou seekest two sheaves, rest and glory. They shall reap glory and rest, who have sown toil and self-abusement⁴."

Break up your fallow ground. This is not the order of husbandry. The ground was already plowed, harrowed, sown. Now he bids her anew, *Break up your fallow ground.* The Church breaks up her own fallow ground, when she stirs up anew the decaying piety of her own members; she breaks up fallow ground, when, by preaching the Gospel of Christ, she brings new people into His fold. And for us too, one sowing sufficeth not. It must be no surface-sowing. And "the soil of our hearts must ever be anew cleansed; for no one in this mortal life is so perfect, in piety, that noxious desires will not spring up again in the heart, as tares in the well-tilled field."

For it is time to seek the Lord, until He come and rain righteousness upon you, or better, until He shall come and teach you righteousness. To rain righteousness is the same image as Solomon uses of Christ; ⁵*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth, and Isaiah, ⁶drop down ye heavens from above and let the skies pour down righteousness.* It expresses in picture-language how He, Who is our Righteousness, came down from heaven, to give life to us, who were dried and parched up and withered, when the whole face of our mortal nature was as dead.

Yet there is nothing to indicate that the Prophet is here using imagery. The Hebrew word is used very rarely in the meaning, to rain; in that of teaching, continually, and that, in exactly the same idiom as here⁷. One office of our Lord was to teach. Nicodemus owned Him, as a teacher sent from God⁸. The Samaritans looked to the Messiah, as one who should teach all things⁹. The prophets foretold that He should teach us His ways¹⁰ that He should be a witness unto the people¹¹.

The Prophet bids them seek diligently¹², and perseveringly, "not leaving off or desisting," if they should not at once find, but continuing the search, quite up to¹³ the time when they should find. His words imply the need of perseverance and patience, which should stop short of nothing but God's own time for finding. The Prophet, as is the way of the prophets, goes on to Christ, who was ever in the prophets' hearts and hopes. The words could only be understood improperly of God the Father. God does not come, Who is everywhere. He ever was among His people, nor did He will to be among them otherwise than heretofore. No coming of God, as God, was looked for, to teach righteousness. Rather, the time was coming, when He would be less visibly among them than before. Among the ten tribes, as a distinct people, He would shortly be no more, either by prophecy, or in worship, or by any perceptible token of His Providence. From Judah also He was about, although at a later period, to withdraw the kingdom of David, and the Urim and Thummim, and the Shechinah, or visible Presence. Soon after the Captivity, prophecy itself was to cease. But "the coming of Christ the Patriarchs and holy men all along desired to see: Abraham saw it and was glad¹⁴. Jacob longed for it¹⁵. The law and the Prophets directed to it, so that there were always in Israel such as waited for it, as appears by the example of old Simeon and Joseph of Arimathea, and those many prophets and righteous men whom our Saviour speaks of¹⁶. He that should come seems to have been a known title for Him; since John Baptist sent two of his disciples, to say unto Him, *Art thou He that shall come, or do we look for another*¹⁷?"

The Prophet saith then, "Now is the time to seek the Lord, and prepare for the coming

¹ Ps. xvi. 2.

² S. John i. 16.

³ S. Bern. de Conv. c. 8. Lap.

⁴ Id. Serm. de S. Bened. § 11. Ib.

⁵ Ps. lxxii. 6.

⁶ xlv. 8.

⁷ with accusat. of that which is taught and dat. of the person, Deut. xxxiii. 10.

⁸ S. John iii. 2.

⁹ Ib. iv. 25.

¹⁰ Is. ii. 3.

¹¹ Ib. iv. 4.

¹² רָדַף.

¹³ This is the force of עָרַךְ.

¹⁴ S. John viii. 56.

¹⁵ Gen. xlix. 18.

¹⁶ S. Luke ii. 25. S. Mark xv. 43. S. Matt. xiii. 17.

¹⁷ S. Matt. xi. 3.

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13 *Ye have plowed

wickedness, ye have reaped

*Job 4. 8. Prov. 22. 8. ch. 8. 7. Gal. 6. 7, 8.

of Christ; for He, when He cometh, will teach you, yea, will give you true righteousness, whereby ye shall be righteous before God, and heirs of His kingdom." "1 So God speaketh through Isaiah, *keep ye judgment and do justice, for My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.* In both places, men are warned, to prepare the way to receive Christ, which was the office assigned to the law. As S. Paul saith, *Whereunto was the law? It was added because of transgressions.* It was given to restrain the passions of men by fear of punishment, lest they should so defile themselves by sin, as to despise the mercy and office of Christ. It was given to prepare our souls by love of righteousness and mercy to receive Christ, that he might enrich them with the Divine wealth of righteousness." "2 If Israel of old were so to order their ways in expectation of Him, and that they might be prepared for His coming; and if their neglecting to do this made them liable to such heavy judgments, how much severer judgments shall they be worthy of, who, after His Coming and raining upon them the plentiful showers of heavenly doctrine, and abundant measure of His grace and gifts of His Holy Spirit, do, for want of breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts, suffer His holy word to be lost on them. The fearful doom of such unfruitful Christians is set down by S. Paul.³

The present is ever the time to seek the Lord. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the Day of Salvation. As Hosea says, it is time to seek the Lord till He come, so S. Paul saith, *unto them that look for Him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.*

13. *Ye have plowed wickedness.* They not only did not that which God commanded, but they did the exact contrary. They cultivated wickedness. They broke up their fallow ground, yet to sow, not wheat, but tares. They did not leave it even to grow of itself, although even thus, on the natural soil of the human heart, it yields a plenteous harvest; but they bestowed their labor on it, plowed it, sowed, and as they sowed, so they reaped, an abundant increase of it. "They brought their ill doings to a harvest, and laid up as in provision the fruits thereof." Iniquity and the results of iniquity, were the gain of all their labor. Of all their toil, they shall have no fruits, except the

iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou

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iniquity itself. "6 By the plowing, sowing, eating the fruits, he marks the obstinacy of incorrigible sinners, who begin ill, go on to worse, and in the worst come to an end. Then too, when the corrupted soul labors with the purpose of a deed of sin, and resolves in its inmost thoughts, how it may bring the ungodly will into effect in deed, it is like one plowing or sowing. But when, having completed the work of iniquity, it exults that it has done ill, it is like one reaping. When further it has broken out so far as, in pride of heart to defend its sins against the law of God prohibiting them, and goes on unconcerned in impenitence, he is like one who, after harvest, eats the fruits stored up."

Ye have eaten the fruit of lies. They had been full of lies⁷; they had lied against God by hypocrisy⁸ and idolatry; they had spoken lies against Him⁹; by denying that He gave them what He bestowed upon them, and ascribing it to their idols¹⁰. All iniquity is a lie. Such then should be the fruit which they tasted, on which they fed. It should not profit, nor satisfy them. It should not merely be empty, as in the case of those who are said to feed on ashes¹¹, but hurtful. As Isaiah saith¹², *they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed, breaketh out into a viper.* "Gain deceives, lust deceives, gluttony deceives; they yield no true delight; they satisfy not, they disgust; and they end in misery of body and soul." "Bodily delights," says a father¹³, "when absent, kindle a vehement longing; when had and eaten, they satiate and disgust the eater. Spiritual delights are distasteful, when unknown; when possessed, they are longed for; and the more those who hunger after them feed upon them, the more they are hungered for. Bodily delights please, untasted; when tasted, they displease; spiritual, when untasted, are held cheap; when experienced, they please. In bodily delights, appetite generates satiety; satiety, disgust. In spiritual, appetite produceth satiety; satiety appetite. For spiritual delights increase longing in the soul, while they satisfy. For the more their sweetness is perceived, so much the more is that known which is loved more eagerly. Unpossessed, they cannot be loved, because their sweetness is unknown."

Because thou didst trust in thy way. Thy way, i. e. not God's. They forsook God's

¹ Osor. ² Poc. ³ Heb. vi. 4-8. ⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

⁵ Heb. ix. 28. ⁶ Rup.

⁷ ch. iv. 1, 2. vii. 3. ⁸ v. 7. vi. 7. vii. 16. x. 4.

⁹ vii. 13.

¹⁰ ii. 5, 12.

¹¹ Is. xlv. 20.

¹² Ib. lix. 4, 5.

¹³ S. Greg. in Evang. Hom. 36. init. L.

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didst trust in thy way, in
the multitude of thy mighty
men.

^b ch. 13. 16.

14 ^b Therefore shall a

way, followed "ways of wickedness and misbelief." While displeasing God, they trusted in the worship of the calves and in the help of Egypt and Assyria, *making flesh their arm, and departing from the living God*. So long as a man mistrusts his ways of sin, there is hope of his conversion amid any depths of sin. When he trusts in his ways, all entrance is closed against the grace of God. He is as one dead; he not only justifies himself, but is self-justified. There is nothing in him, neither love nor fear, which can be awakened.

14. *Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people*, lit. *peoples*. Such was the immediate fruit of departing from God and trusting in men and idols. They trusted in their own might, and the multitude of their people. That might should, through intestine division and anarchy, become their destruction. As in the dislocated state of the Roman empire under the first emperors, so in Israel, the successive usurpers arose out of their armies, *the multitude of their mighty ones*, in whom they trusted. The confused noise² of war should first arise in the midst of their own peoples. They are spoken of not as one, but as many; *peoples*³, not, as God willed them to be, one people, for they had no principle of oneness or stability, who had no legitimate succession, either of kings or of priests; who had *made kings, but not through God*. Each successor had the same right as his predecessor, the right of might, and furnished an example and precedent and sanction to the murderer of himself or of his son.

All thy fortresses shall be spoiled, lit. *the whole of thy fortresses shall be wasted*. He speaks of the whole as one. Their fenced cities, which cut off all approach⁴, should be one waste⁵.

¹ See Introd. p. 2.

² as in Am. ii. 2.

³ בעמים plural. The corruption in some MSS. מן (sing.) and the rendering of the old Versions (as of our own) in the singular, (with the same general sense), illustrate the peculiarity of the idiom for which they substituted an easier, and nearly equivalent, phrase.

⁴ The Etymology of כִּנְצָר, as of *Bozrah*.

⁵ expressed by the union of כָּל with the genitive plur. and the sing. verb, which is very rare. Is. lxi. 7. Nah. iii. 7. Prov. xvi. 2. have been cited as the only instances.

⁶ 2 Kings xvii. 3.

⁷ Ezer occurs in *Ezrahdan*, Tiglath pileser and, probably, is the same as eazar and ezer in Nebuchadnezzar, and Sharezer. It probably signifies "help." A much stronger omission occurs probably in the name of the parricide Sharezer, 2 Kings xix. 37. whose whole name was Nergal Sharezer. Merodach Baladan is probably the Mardocempal of Ptol. Rawl.

tumult arise among thy
people, and all thy fortresses
shall be spoiled, as Shalman
spoiled ^c Betharbel in the

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^{*2} Kgs. 18. 34.
& 19. 13.

They had forsaken God, their fortress and deliverer, and so He gave up their fortresses to the enemy, so that all and each of them were laid waste. The confusion, begun among themselves, prepared for destruction by the enemy. Of this he gives one awful type.

As *Shalman spoiled* (or wasted) *Beth-Arbel in the day of battle*. *Shalman* is, no doubt, *Shalmaneser king of Assyria*, who came up against Hoshea, early in his reign, and he became a servant to him and brought him a present⁶. *Shalman* being the characteristic part of the name⁷, the Prophet probably omitted the rest, on the ground of the rhythm. *Beth-Arbel* is a city, which the Greeks, retaining, in like way, only the latter and characteristic half of the name, called *Arbela*⁸. Of the several cities called *Arbela*, that celebrated in Grecian history, was part of the Assyrian empire. Two others, one⁹ in the mountain-district of Pella¹⁰ and so on the East side of Jordan, the other between Sephoris and Tiberias¹¹, (and so in Naphthali) must, together with the countries in which they lay, have fallen into the hands of the Assyrians in the reign of *Tiglath-pileser*, who took—*Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphthali*¹², in the reign of Pekah. The whole country, East of Jordan, being now in the hands of *Shalmaneser*, his natural approach to Samaria was over the Jordan, through the valley or plain of Jezreel. Here was the chief wealth of Israel, and the fittest field for the Assyrian horse. Over the Jordan then, whence Israel itself came when obedient to God, whence came the earlier instruments of God's chastisements, came doubtless the host of *Shalmaneser*, along the "great plain" of *Esdraelon*. "In that plain" also

Herod. i. p. 502. *Chadortaoer* (Gen. xiv. 1. 9.) is very probably the same as the *kudurniapula* of the Babylonian bricks, *mapula* being omitted, and *taoer*, i. e. *el-omer* "the ravager" being equivalent to the meaning of *abba Maftu* of the bricks, "waster of the West." See Rawl. Herod. i. 436.

⁸ as Beth Aven, (although on other grounds,) was called Aven (ver. 8) Beth Baal Meon is called more commonly Baal Meon, but also Beth Meon and now Maen or Myun; *Gilgal* is probably called Beth Haggilgal, Neh. xii. 29; *Diblathaim* (afterward *Diblati*) is Beth *Diblathaim*, Jer. xviii. 22; the people of *Bethar* are called by Josephus (Ant. vi. 2. 2.) *Corraci*; *Ophrah* is probably *Bethle apfrah*, Mic. i. 10; *Beth Millo*, 2 Kings xii. 21. *Millo*; *Beth Nimrah*, now *Nemrin*; *Beth Eden*, now *Eden*; *Beth Azmaveth*, *Beth-ekel-harohim*, 2 Kings x. 12. *Beth-ekel*, 14 in *Eus. Baithakath*; *Beashterah*, (for *Beth Ash-tarah*) *Ashtaroth*. See all these in Ges. Lex. v. כִּי p. 193-6.

⁹ Eus. Onom. s. v.

¹⁰ Jos. B. J. i. 16. 2. Vit. 37. 66.

¹¹ 2 Kings xv. 29.

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^a ch. 13. 16.

† Heb. *the evil of your evil.*

• ver. 7.

day of battle: ^a the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.

15 So shall Bethel do unto you because of † your great wickedness: in a morning ^a shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

lay an *Arbela*, "nine miles from Legion!" Legion itself was at the Western extremity of the plain, as Scythopolis or Bethshean lay at the East ². It was about fifteen miles West of Nazareth ³, and ten miles from Jezreel ⁴. Beth-Arbel must accordingly have lain somewhere in the middle of the valley of Jezreel. Near this Arbela, then, Israel must have sustained a decisive defeat from Shalmaneser. For the Prophet does not say only, that he *spoiled Beth-Arbel*, but that he did this *in a day of battle*. Here Hosea, probably in the last years of his life, saw the fulfillment of his own earlier prophecy; and God *brake the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel* ⁵.

The mother was dashed to pieces on the children. It was an aggravation of this barbarity, that, first the infants were dashed against the stones before their mother's eyes, then the mothers themselves were dashed upon them. Syrians ⁶, Assyrians ⁷, Medes ⁸, Babylonians ⁹, used this barbarity. India has borne witness to us of late, how heathen nature remains the same.

It may be that, in the name *Betharbel*, the Prophet alludes to the name *Bethel* ¹⁰. As *Betharbel*, i. e. *the house*, or it may be the idolatrous temple of *Arbel*, rescued it not, but was rather the cause of its destruction, so shall Bethel. The holy places of Israel, the memorials of the free love of God to their forefathers, were pledges to them, the children of those forefathers, that, so long as they continued in the faith of their fathers, God the Unchangeable, would continue those same mercies to them. When they turned Bethel, *the house of God*, into Bethaven, *house of vanity*, then it became, like Betharbel, lit. *house of ambush of God*, the scene and occasion of their desolation.

15. *So shall Bethel do unto you*. God was the Judge, Who condemned them so to suffer from the enemy. The Assyrian was the instrument of the wrath of God. But, in order to point out the moral government of God, the Prophet says, neither that God did it, nor that the Assyrian did it, but Bethel,

CHAPTER XI.

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1 *The ingratitude of Israel unto God for his benefits.* 5 *His judgment.* 8 *God's mercy toward them.*

WHEN ^a Israel was a child, then I loved him, and ^b called my ^c son out of Egypt.

• ch. 2. 15.

^b Matt. 2. 15.
^c Ex. 4. 22, 23.

once *the house of God*, now the place where they dishonored God, *because of your great wickedness*, lit. *the wickedness of your wickedness*. In their wickedness itself, there was an essence of wickedness, malice within malice.

In a morning shall the king of Israel be cut off. Hoshea was cut off finally, leaving neither root nor branch. His kingdom perished; he left no memorial. Like the morning, he seemed to dawn on the troubles of his people: he sinned against God: and *in a morning*, the kingdom, in the multitude of whose mighty men he trusted, was cut off for ever.

XI. 1. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him*. God loved Israel, as He Himself formed it, ere it corrupted itself. He loved it for the sake of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as he saith ¹¹, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*. Then, when it was weak, helpless, oppressed by the Egyptians, afflicted, destitute, God loved him, cared for him, delivered him from oppression, and called him out of Egypt. "When did He love Israel? When, by His guidance, Israel regained freedom, his enemies were destroyed, he was fed with food from heaven, he heard the voice of God, and received the law from Him. He was unformed in Egypt; then he was informed by the rules of the law, so as to be matured there. He was a child in that vast waste. For he was nourished, not by solid food, but by milk, i. e. by the rudiments of piety and righteousness, that he might gradually attain the strength of a man. So that law was a schoolmaster, to retain Israel as a child, by the discipline of a child, until the time should come when all, who despised not the heavenly gifts, should receive the Spirit of adoption. The Prophet then, in order to shew the exceeding guilt of Israel," says, "*When Israel was a child*, (in the wilderness, for then he was born when he bound himself to conform to the Divine law, and was not yet matured) *I loved him*, i. e. I gave him the law, priesthood, judgments, precepts, instructions; I loaded him with most ample

¹ Eus. l. c.

² Eus. (v. Ἱερσαλ) assigns these, as the two extremities. ³ Reland, p. 873. ⁴ Itin. Hieros. p. 580.

⁵ ch. i. 5. ⁶ 2 Kgs. viii. 12.

⁷ Is. xlii. 10.

⁸ Osor.

⁹ here and xlii. ult.

¹⁰ Ps. cxxxvii. 8, 9.

¹¹ Mal. i. 2.

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2 As they called them,
so they went from them:
2 Kgs 17.
10. ch. 2. 13. 4 they sacrificed unto
& 13. 2.

benefits; I preferred him to all nations, expending on him, as on My chief heritage and peculiar possession, much watchful care and pains."

I called My son out of Egypt, as He said to Pharaoh¹, *Israel is My son, even My firstborn; let My son go, that he may serve Me*. God chose him out of all nations, to be His peculiar people. Yet also God chose him, not for himself, but because He willed that Christ, His only Son, should *after the flesh* be born of him, and for, and in, the Son, God called His people, *My son*. "2 The people of Israel was called a son, as regards the elect, yet only for the sake of Him, the Only-Begotten Son, Begotten, not adopted, Who, *after the flesh*, was to be born of that people, that, through His Passion, He might bring many sons to glory, disdaining not to have them as brethren and co-heirs. For, had He not come, Who was to come, the Well-Beloved Son of God, Israel too could never, any more than the other nations, have been called the son of so great a Father, as the Apostle, himself of that people, saith³, *For we were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others*."

Since, however, these words relate to literal Israel, the people whom God brought out by Moses, how were they fulfilled in the infant Jesus, when He was brought back out of Egypt, as S. Matthew teaches us, they were⁴?

Because Israel himself was a type of Christ, and for the sake of Him Who was to be born of the seed of Israel, did God call Israel, *My son*; for His sake only did He deliver him. The two deliverances, of the whole Jewish people, and of Christ the Head, occupied the same position in God's dispensations. He rescued Israel, whom He called His son, in its childish and infantine condition, at the very commencement of its being, as a people. His true Son by Nature, Christ our Lord, He brought up in His Infancy, when He began to shew forth His mercies to us in Him. Both had, by His appointment, taken refuge in Egypt; both were, by His miraculous call, to Moses in the bush, to Joseph in the dream, recalled from it. S. Matthew apparently quotes these words, not to prove anything, but in order to point out the relation of God's former dealings with the latter, the beginning and the close, what relates to the body, and what relates to the Head. He tells us that the former deliverance had its completion in Christ, that in His deliverance

Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Before
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was the full solid completion of that of Israel; and that then indeed it might, in its completest fullness, be said, *Out of Egypt have I called My Son*.

When Israel was brought out of Egypt, the figure took place; when Christ was called, the reality was fulfilled. The act itself, on the part of God, was prophetic. When He delivered Israel, and called him His first-born, He willed, in the course of time, to bring up from Egypt His Only-Begotten Son. The words are prophetic, because the event which they speak of, was prophetic. "They speak of Israel as one collective body, and, as it were, one person, called by God *My son*, viz. by adoption, still in the years of infancy, and beloved by God, called of God out of Egypt by Moses, as Jesus, His true Son, was by the Angel." The following verses are not prophetic, because in them the Prophet no longer speaks of Israel as one, but as composed of the many sinful individuals in it. Israel was a prophetic people, in regard to this dispensation of God towards him; not in regard to his rebellions and sins.

2. *As they called them, so they went from them*. The Prophet changes his tone, no longer speaking of that one first call of God to Israel as a whole, whereby He brought out Israel as one man, His one son; which one call he obeyed. Here he speaks of God's manifold calls to the people, throughout their whole history, which they as often disobeyed, and not disobeyed only, but went contrariwise. *They called them*. Whether God employed Moses, or the judges, or priests, or kings, or prophets, to call them, it was all one. Whenever or by whomsoever they were called, they turned away in the opposite direction, to serve their idols. They proportioned and fitted, as it were, their disobedience to God's long-suffering. "5 Then chiefly they threw off obedience, despised their admonitions, and worked themselves up the more frantically to a zeal for the sin which they had begun." *They*, God's messengers, *called*; so, in like manner, *they went away from them*. *They sacrificed unto Baalim*, i. e. their many Baals, in which they cherished idolatry, cruelty, and fleshly sin. So "6 when Christ came and called them manifoldly, as in the great day of the feast, *If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink*, the more diligently He called them, the more diligently they went away from Him, and returned to their idols,

¹ Ex. iv. 22, 3.² Rup.³ Eph. ii. 3.⁴ Il. 15.⁵ Osor.⁶ Rib.

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3 °I taught Ephraim
also to go, taking them by
their arms; but they knew
not that 'I healed them.

4 I drew them with cords

of a man, with bands of
love: and °I was to them
as they that †take off the
yoke on their jaws, and °I
laid meat unto them.

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° Lev. 26. 13.
† Heb. *lift up*.
° Ps. 78. 25.
ch. 2. 8.

to the love and possession of riches and houses and pleasures, for whose sake they despised the truth."

3. *I taught Ephraim also to go*, lit. and *I set Ephraim on his feet*; i. e. while they were rebelling, I was helping and supporting them, as a nurse doth her child, teaching it to go with little steps, step by step, "accustoming it to go by little and little without weariness;" and not only so, but *taking them by their arms*; or it may be equally translated, *He took them in His arms*, i. e. God not only gently taught them to walk, but when they were wearied, *He took them up in His arms*, as a nurse doth a child when tired with its little attempts to walk. Such was the love and tender care of God, guiding and upholding Israel in His ways which He taught him, guarding him from weariness, or, if wearied, taking him in the arms of His mercy and refreshing him. So Moses says, *In the wilderness thou hast seen, how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came unto this place*; and he exostulates with God, *Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth his sucking child, unto the land which Thou swarest unto their fathers?* ° Briefly yet magnificently doth this place hint at the wondrous patience of God, whereof Paul too speaks, *for forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness*. For as a nursing father beareth patiently with a child, who hath not yet come to years of discretion, and, although at times he be moved to strike it in return, yet mostly he sootheth its childish follies with blandishments, and, ungrateful though it be, carries it in his arms, so the Lord God, Whose are these words, patiently bore with the unformed people, ignorant of the spiritual mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and although He slew the bodies of many of them in the wilderness, yet the rest He soothed with many and great miracles, *leading them about, and instructing them*, (as Moses says) *keeping them as the apple of His eye* °.

But they knew not that *I healed them*. They laid it not to heart, and therefore what they knew with their understanding was worse than ignorance. "°I Who was a Father, became a nurse, and Myself carried My little

one in My arms, that he should not be hurt in the wilderness, or scured by heat or darkness. By day I was a cloud; by night, a column of fire, that I might by My light illumine, and heal those whom I had protected. And when they had sinned and had made the calf, I gave them place for repentance, and they knew not that I healed them, so as, for forty years, to close the wound of idolatry, and restore them to their former health."

° The Son of God carried us in His arms to the Father, when He went forth carrying His Cross, and on the wood of the Cross stretched out His arms for our redemption. Those too doth Christ carry daily in His arms, whom He continually entreath, comforteth, preserveth, so gently, that with much alacrity and without any grievous hindrance they perform every work of God, and with heart enlarged run, rather than walk, the way of God's commandments. Yet do these need great caution, that they be clothed with great circumspection and humility, and despise not others. Else Christ would say of them, *They knew not that I healed them*."

4. *I drew them with the cords of a man*. ° Wanton heifers such as was Israel, are drawn with ropes; but although Ephraim struggled against Me, I would not draw him as a beast, but I drew him as a man, (not a servant, but a son) *with cords of love*. "Love is the magnet of love." ° The first and chief commandment of the law, is not of fear, but of love, because He willeth those whom He commandeth, to be sons rather than servants." ° Our Lord saith, *No man cometh unto Me, except the Father Who hath sent Me, draw him*. He did not say, lead him, but draw him. This violence is done to the heart, not to the body. Why marvel? Believe and thou comest; love and thou art drawn. Think it not a rough and uneasy violence: it is sweet, alluring; the sweetness draws thee. Is not a hungry sheep drawn, when the grass is shewn it? It is not, I ween, driven on in holy, but is bound tight by longing. So do thou too come to Christ. Do not conceive of long journeyings. When thou believest, then thou comest. For to Him Who is everywhere, men come by loving, not by traveling." So the Bride saith, ° *draw me and I will run after Thee*. "How sweet," says S. Augustine, when converted °, "did it at once

° Deut. i. 31. ° Num. xi. 12. ° Rup. ° Acts xlii. 18.
° Deut. xxxii. 10. ° S. Jer. ° Dion. ° Lap.

° Rib. ° S. Aug. Serm. 81. on N. T. § 2. Oxf. Tr.
° Cant. i. 4. ° Conf. ix. 1.

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5 ¶ 'He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, ¹ because they refused to return.

¹ See ch. 8. 13.
& 9. 3.
² Kgs. 17. 13, 14.

become to me, to want the sweetnesses of those toys; and what I feared to be parted from, was now a joy to part with. For Thou didst cast them forth from me, Thou true and highest Sweetness. Thou castedst them forth, and for them enteredst in Thyself, sweeter than all pleasure, though not to flesh and blood; brighter than all light, but more hidden than all depths; higher than all honor, but not to the high in their own conceits."

"¹ Christ drew us also with the cords of a man, when for us He became Man, our flesh, our Brother, in order that by teaching, suffering, dying for us, He might in a wondrous way bind and draw us to Himself and to God; that He might redeem the earthly Adam, might transform and make him heavenly;" "² giving us ineffable tokens of His love. For He giveth Himself to us for our Food; He giveth us sacraments; by Baptism and repentance He conformeth us anew to original righteousness. Hence He saith ³, *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men unto me*; and Paul ⁴, *I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me*. This most loving drawing, our dullness and weakness needeth, who ever, without grace, grovel amidst vile and earthly things."

"All the methods and parts of God's government are twined together, as so many twisted cords of love from Him, so ordered, that they ought to draw man with all his heart to love Him again." "⁵ Man, the image of the Mind of God, is impelled to zeal for the service of God, not by fear, but by love. No band is mightier, nor constrains more firmly all the feelings of the mind. For it holdeth not the body enchained, while the mind revolteth and longeth to break away, but it so bindeth to itself the mind and will, that it should will, long for, compass, nought beside, save how, even amid threats of death, to obey the commands of God. Bands they are, but bands so gentle and so passing sweet, that we must account them perfect freedom and the highest dignity."

And I was to them as they that take off (lit. that lift up) the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. Thus explained, the words carry on the description of God's goodness, that He allowed not the yoke of slavery to weigh heavy upon them, as He saith ⁶, *I am*

¹ Rup. Lap.
⁴ Gal. ii. 20.

² Dion.

³ S. John xii. 32.
⁵ Osor.

6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, ¹ because of their own counsels.

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They became
tributaries to
Salmannasser.
¹ ch. 10. 6.

the Lord your God, Which brought you out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen, and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright; and God appealeth to them¹, Wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me.

But the words seem more naturally to mean, *I was to them*, in their sight, I was regarded by them, as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws, i. e. that raise the yoke, (not being already upon them) to place it over their jaws. "For plainly the yoke never rests on the jaws, but only passed over them, either when put on the neck, or taken off." This, God seemed to them to be doing, ever placing some new yoke or constraint upon them. *And I, God adds, all the while was placing meat before them*; i. e. while God was taking all manner of care of them, and providing for them all things richly to enjoy, He was regarded by them as one who, instead of laying food before them, was lifting the yoke over their jaws. God did them all good, and they thought it all hardship.

5. *He shall not return to Egypt.* Some had probably returned already to Egypt; the rest were looking to Egypt for help, and rebelling against the Assyrian, (whose servant their king Hoshea had become), and making alliance with So king of Egypt. The Prophet tells them, as a whole, that they shall not return to Egypt to which they looked, but should have the Assyrian for their king, whom they would not. *They refused to return to God, Who lovingly called them*; therefore, what they desired, they should not have; and what they feared, that they should have. They would not have God for their king; therefore *the Assyrian should be their king*, and a worse captivity than that of Egypt should befall them. For, from that they were delivered; from this, now hanging over them, never should they be restored.

6. *And the sword shall abide on his cities, lit. shall light, shall whirl down upon.* It shall come with violence upon them as a thing whirled with force, and then it shall alight and abide, to their destruction; as Jeremiah says ², *a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously [lit. whirl down] on the head of the wicked.* As God said to David, after the murder of Uriah ³, *Now therefore the sword shall never de-*

⁵ Lev. xxvi. 13.
⁶ Jer. xxiii. 19.

⁷ Mic. vi. 3.
⁸ 2 Sam. xii. 10.

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Jer. 3. 6, &c.
& 8. 6.
ch. 4. 16.
ch. 7. 16.
† Heb. together
they exalted
not.

7 And my people are
bent to ^abacksliding from
me: ^bthough they called
them to the most High,
† none at all would exalt
him.

part from thy house, so as to Israel, whose kings were inaugurated by bloodshed. By God's appointment, "blood will have blood." Their own sword first came down and rested upon them; then the sword of the Assyrian. So after they had killed the Holy One and the Just, the sword of the Zealots came down and rested upon them, before the destruction by the Romans.

And shall consume his branches, i. e. his mighty men. It is all one, whether the mighty men are so called, by metaphor, from the branches of a tree, or from the bars of a city, made out of those branches. Their mighty men, so far from escaping for their might, should be the first to perish.

And devour them, because of their own counsels. Their counsels, wise after this world's wisdom, were without God, against the counsels of God. Their destruction then should come from their own wisdom, as it is said¹, *Let them fall by their own counsels*, and Job saith², *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning is carried headlong*, i. e. it is the clean contrary of what they intend or plan; they purpose, as they think, warily; an unseen power whirls their scheme on and precipitates it. And his own counsel shall cast him down³; and above; ⁴*Israel shall be ashamed through his own counsels*. Hoshea's conspiracy with So, which was to have been his support against Assyria, brought Assyria against him, and his people into captivity.

7. And My people are bent to backsliding from Me, lit. are hung to it! as we say, "a man's whole being hangs on a thing." A thing hung to or on another, sways to and fro within certain limits, but its relation to that on which it is hung, remains immovable. Its power of motion is restrained within those limits. So Israel, so the sinner, however he veer to and fro in the details and circumstances of his sin, is fixed and immovable in his adherence to his sin itself. Whatever else Israel did, on one thing his whole being, as a nation, depended, on backsliding or aversion⁵ from God. The political existence of Israel, as a separate kingdom, depended on his worship of the calves, the sin wherewith Jeroboam made Israel to sin. This was the ground of their⁶ refusing

8 °How shall I give thee
up, Ephraim? how shall I
deliver thee, Israel? How
shall I make thee as ^pAd-
mah? how shall I set thee
as Zeboim? ^qmine heart is

Before
CHRIST
cir. 740.

Jer. 9. 7.
ch. 6. 4.
Gen. 14. 8.
& 19. 24. 25.
Deut. 29. 23.
Amos 4. 11.
† Deut. 32. 36.
Is. 63. 15.
Jer. 31. 20.

to return, that, through habitual sin, they were no longer in their own power: they were fixed in evil.

Though they called them to the most High, lit. called him. As one man, the prophets called Israel; as one man, Israel refused to return; none at all would exalt Him, lit. together he exalteth Him not.

8. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? ¹"God is infinitely just and infinitely merciful. The two attributes are so united in Him, yea, so one in Him Who is always One, and in Whose counsels there is no variable-ness, nor shadow of turning, that the one doth not ever thwart the proceeding of the other. Yet, in order to shew that our ills are from our own ill-deserts, not from any pleasure of His in inflicting ill, and that what mercy He sheweth, is from His own goodness, not from any in us, God is represented in this impassioned expression as in doubt, and (so to say) divided betwixt justice and mercy, the one pleading against the other. At the last, God so determines, that both should have their share in the issue, and that Israel should be both justly punished and mercifully spared and relieved."

God pronounces on the evil deserts of Israel, even while He mitigates His sentence. The depth of the sinner's guilt reflects the more vividly the depth of God's mercy. In saying, *how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?* He says, in fact, that they were, for their sins, worthy to be utterly destroyed, with no trace, no memorial, save that eternal desolation like the five cities of the plain, of which were Sodom and Gomorrah, which God² hath set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Such was their desert. But God says, with inexpressible tenderness, *Mine heart is turned within Me* lit. upon Me or against Me, so as to be a burden to Him; as we say of the heart, that it is "heavy." God deigneth to speak as if His love was heavy, or a weight upon Him, while He thought of the punishment which their sins deserved.

My heart is turned. ³"As soon as I had spoken evil against thee, mercy prevailed, tenderness touched Me; the tenderness of the Father overcame the austerity of the Judge."

¹ Ps. v. 10. ² v. 13. ³ Ib. xviii. 7. ⁴ ch. x. 6.

⁵ The Rabbins observe that תשובה is used in an

evil sense of aversion from God, תשובה of conver-
sion to Him. ⁶ ver. 5. ⁷ Psc. ⁸ S. Jude 7. ⁹ Rup.

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turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I

will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

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* Num. 23. 19.
Is. 55. 8, 9.
Mal. 3. 6.

My repentings are kindled together, or My strong compassions¹ are kindled, i.e. with the heat and glow of love; as the disciples say², Did not our hearts burn within us? and as it is said of Joseph his bowels did yearn³ (lit. were hot) towards his brother; and of the true mother before Solomon, her bowels yearned⁴ (E. M. were hot) upon her son.

Admah and Zebaim were cities in the same plain with Sodom and Gomorrah, and each had their petty king⁵. In the history of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, they are not named, but are included in the general title *those cities and all the plain*⁶. The more then would Hosea's hearers think of that place in Moses where he does mention them, and where he threatens them with the like end; *when the stranger shall see, that the whole land thereof is brimstone and salt and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zebaim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath.* Such was the end, at which all their sins aimed; such the end, which God had held out to them; but His strong compassions were kindled.

9. *I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger.* It is the voice of mercy, rejoicing over judgment. Mercy prevails in God over the rigor of His justice, that though He will not suffer them to go utterly unpunished, yet He will abate of it, and not utterly consume them.

I will not return to destroy Ephraim. God saith that He will not, as it were, glean Ephraim, going over it again, as man doth, in order to leave nothing over. As it is in Jeremiah⁸, *They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel, as a vine. Turn back thine hand, as a grapegatherer into the baskets; and, if grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleanings? but I have made Esau bare*⁹.

For I am God and not man, "I¹⁰ not swayed by human passions, and so tempering His wrath, as, in the midst of it, to remember mercy; so punishing the iniquity of the sinful children, as at once to make good His gracious promises which He made to their forefathers." "I¹¹ Man punishes, to destroy; God smites, to amend."

The Holy One in the midst of thee. The holiness of God is at once a ground why He punishes iniquity, and yet does not punish to the full extent of the sin. Truth and faithfulness are part of the holiness of God. He, the Holy One Who was in the midst of them, by virtue of His covenant with their fathers, would keep the covenant which He had made, and for their father's sakes would not wholly cut them off. Yet the holiness of God hath another aspect too, in virtue of which the unholy cannot profit by the promises of the All-Holy. "I will not," paraphrases S. Cyril, "use unmingled wrath. I will not give over Ephraim, wicked as he has become, to entire destruction. Why? Do they not deserve it? Yes, He saith, but I am God and not man, i.e. Good, and not suffering the motions of anger to overcome Me. For that is a human passion. Why then dost Thou yet punish, seeing Thou art God, not overcome with anger, but rather following Thine essential gentleness? I punish, He saith, because I am not only Good, as God, but Holy also, hating iniquity, rejecting the polluted, turning away from God-haters, converting the sinner, purifying the impure, that he may again be joined to Me. We, then, if we prize the being with God, must, with all our might, fly from sin, and remember what He said, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*."

And I will not enter the city. God, Who is everywhere, speaks of Himself, as present to us, when He shews that presence in acts of judgment or of mercy. He visited His people in Egypt, to deliver them; He visited Sodom and Gomorrah as a Judge, making known to us that He took cognizance of their extreme wickedness. God says, that He would not enter the city, as He did the cities of the plain, when He overthrew them, because He willed to save them. As a Judge, He acts as though He looked away from their sin, lest, seeing their city to be full of wickedness, He should be compelled to punish it. "I will not smite indiscriminately, as man doth, who when wroth, bursts into an offending city, and destroys all. In this sense, the Apostle says¹² *Hath God cast away His people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.* God hath not cast away His people, whom He foreknew.

¹ The word *חַסְדִּים* is an intensive.

² Luke xiv. 32.

³ Gen. xliii. 30.

⁴ 1 Kings iii. 26. The word is the same in all three places *נַחֲמָה*.

⁵ Gen. xiv. 2.

⁶ Deut. xix. 22, 3.

⁷ Ib. xlix. 9, 10.

⁸ Rup.

⁹ Ib. xix. 25.

¹⁰ vi. 9.

¹¹ S. Jer.

¹² Rom. xi. 1, 2, 4, 5.

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10 They shall walk after
the LORD: "he shall roar
like a lion: when he shall
roar, then the children
shall tremble 'from the
west.

* Is. 31. 4.
Joel 3. 16.
Amos 1. 2.
' Zech. 8. 7.

What saith the answer of God to Elias! I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. God then was wroth, not with His people, but with unbelief. For He was not angered in such wise, as not to receive the remnant of His people, if they were converted. No Jew is therefore repelled, because the Jewish nation denied Christ; but whoso, whether Jew or Gentile, denieth Christ, he himself, in his own person, repels himself."

10. *They shall walk after the Lord.* Not only would God not destroy them all, but a remnant of them should walk after the Lord, i. e. they shall believe in Christ. The Jews of old understood this of Christ. One of them saith¹, "this pointeth to the time of their redemption." And another², "Although I will withdraw from the midst of them My Divine Presence for their iniquity, and remove them out of their own land, yet shall there be a long time in which they shall seek after the Lord and find Him." This is what Hosea has said before³, that they should abide many days without a king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice;—afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king. "Whereas now they fled from God, and walked after other gods after the imagination of their evil hearts, after their own devices⁴, then He promises, they shall walk after God the Lord, following the will, the mind, the commandments, the example of Almighty God. As God says of David, He kept My commandments, and walked after Me with all his heart⁵; and Micah foretells that many nations shall say, we will walk in His paths⁶." They shall follow after Him, Whose Infinite perfections none can reach; yet they shall follow after, never standing still, but reaching on to that which is unattainable; by His grace, attaining the more by imitating what is inimitable, and stopping short of no perfection, until, in His Presence, they be perfected in Him.

He shall roar like a lion. Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah⁷. His roaring is His loud call to repentance, by Himself and by His Apostles. The voice of God to sin-

¹ Tanchum, in Poc.

² Hos. iii. 4, 5.

³ Hos. vii. 13. Jer. vii. 9. iii. 17. xviii. 12.

⁴ Kilmch.

⁵ Poc.

11 They shall tremble
as a bird out of Egypt, "and
as a dove out of the land
of Assyria: "and I will
place them in their houses,
saith the LORD.

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Is. 60. 8.
ch. 7. 11.
Ezek. 28. 25,
26. & 37. 21, 23.

ners, although full of love, must be full of awe too. He calls them, not only to flee to His mercy, but to flee from the wrath to come. He shall call to them with a voice of Majesty and command.

When He shall roar, the children shall tremble from the West, i. e. they shall come in haste and fear to God. "His word is powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. Whence those whose hearts were pricked at the preaching of St. Peter, said to him with trembling⁸, Men and brethren what shall we do? So did the preaching of judgment to come terrify the world, that from all places some did come out of the captivity of the world and did fly to Christ⁹." He says, from the West; for from the West have most come in to the Gospel. Yet the Jews were then about to be carried to the East, not to the West; and of the West the prophets had no human knowledge. But the ten tribes, although carried to the East into Assyria, did not all remain there, since before the final dispersion, we find Jews in Italy, Greece, Asia Minor; whither those who had been restored to their own land, would not have anew exiled themselves. In these, whenever they were converted, this prophecy was fulfilled.

11. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt.* The West denoted Europe; Egypt and Assyria stand, each for all the lands beyond them, and so for Africa and Asia; all together comprise the three quarters of the world, whence converts have chiefly come to Christ. These are likened to birds, chiefly for the swiftness with which they shall then haste to the call of God, who now turned away the more, the more they were called. The dove, especially, was a bird of Palestine, proverbial for the swiftness of its flight, easily affrighted, and flying the more rapidly, the more it was frightened, and returning to its cot from any distance whither it might be carried; whence Isaiah also says of the converts¹⁰, Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? "The Hebrews," says S. Jerome, "refer this to the coming of the Christ, Who, they hope, will come; we shew that it hath taken place already. For both from Egypt and Assyria, i. e.

⁸ 1 Kings xiv. 8.

⁹ iv. 2.

¹⁰ Rev. v. 6.

¹¹ Heb. iv. 12.

¹² Acts ii. 37.

¹³ Poc.

¹⁴ Is. lx. 8.

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7 ch. 12. 1.

12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and

from East and West, from North and South, have they come, and daily do they come, who sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

And I will place them in their houses. Their houses may be their own particular Churches, in the one Church or House of God¹. In this house, God says, that He will make them to dwell, not again to be removed from it, nor shaken in it, but in a secure dwelling-place here until they be fitted to be removed to everlasting habitations. "2 In their houses, i. e. in the mansions prepared for them. For from the beginning of the world, when He created our first parents, and blessed them and said, *Increase and multiply and replenish the earth*, He prepared for them everlasting houses or mansions. Whereof He said, just before His Death, *In My father's house are many mansions*, and in the last Day, He will say, *Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*.

12. Ephraim compasseth Me about with lies. Having spoken of future repentance, conversion, restoration, he turns back to those around him, and declares why they can have no share in that restoration. Nothing about them was true. If ever they approached God, it was with lies. "3 God, being infinite, cannot really be compassed about." The Prophet so speaks, to describe the "great multitude of those who thus lied to God, and the multitude and manifoldness of their lies. Wherever God looked, in all parts of their kingdom, in all their doings, all which He could see was lying to Himself." All was, as it were, one throng of lies, heaped on one another, jostling with one another. Such is the world now. "Their sin was especially a lie, because they sinned, not through ignorance, but through malice." Their chief lie was the setting up of the worship of the calves, with a worldly end, yet with pretence of religion towards God; denying Him, the One true God, in that they joined idols with Him, yet professing to serve Him. And so all their worship of God, their repentance, their prayers, their sacrifices were all one lie. For one lie underlay all, penetrated all, corrupted all. All half-belief is unbelief; all half-repentance is unrepentance, all half-worship is unworship; and, in that each and all give themselves out for that Divine whole, whereof they are but the coun-

is faithful || with the saints. Before CHRIST cir. 740.

CHAPTER XII.

1 A reproof of Ephraim, Judah, and Jacob. 3 By former favors

1 Or, with the most holy.

terfeit, each and all are lies, wherewith men, on all sides, encompass God. From these wrong thoughts of God all their other deceits flowed, while yet, "they deceived, not Him but themselves, in that they thought that they could deceive Him, Who cannot be deceived." When Christ came, the house of Israel surrounded Him with lies, the scribes and lawyers, the Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians, vying with one another, how they might entangle Him in His talk⁴.

But Judah yet ruleth with God. Ephraim had cast off the rule of God, the kings and priests whom He had appointed, so that his whole kingdom and polity was without God and against Him. In contrast with this, Judah, amid all His sins, was outwardly faithful. He adhered to the line of kings, from whom was to spring the Christ, David's Son but David's Lord. He worshiped with the priests whom God had appointed to offer the typical sacrifices, until He should come, the High Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek, Who should end those sacrifices by the Sacrifice of Himself. Thus far Judah ruled with God; he was on the side of God, maintained the worship of God, was upheld by God. So Abijah said to Jeroboam⁵, *The Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him, and the priests which minister unto the Lord are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business. For we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but ye have forsaken Him, and behold God is with us for our Captain, &c.*

And is faithful with the saints; or [better perhaps, with the E. M.] with the All-Holy. The same plural is used of God elsewhere⁶; and its use, like that of the ordinary name of God, is founded on the mystery of the Trinity. It does not teach it, but neither can it be accounted for in any other way. This faithfulness of Judah was outward only, (as the upbraiding of the Prophet to Judah testifies,) yet did it much favor inward holiness. The body without the soul is dead; yet the life, even when seeming to be dying out, might be brought back, when the body was there; not, when it too was dissolved. Hence Judah had many good kings, Israel none. Yet, in that he says, *yet ruleth with God*, he shews that a time was coming when Judah too would be, not with God but against Him, and also would be cast off.

XII. 1. Ephraim feedeth on wind, and fol-

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

⁴ S. Matt. xxii. 15.

² Rup.

⁶ 2 Chron. xiii. 10-12.

³ Poc.

⁵ קרושים Josh. xxiv. 10. and in Prov. xxx. 3. where our translators too render it the holy.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

he exhorteth to repentance. 7
Ephraim's sins provoke God.

* ch. 8. 7.

EPHRAIM *feedeth on
wind, and followeth
after the east wind: he
daily increaseth lies and
desolation; °and they do
make a covenant with the

° 2 Kgs. 17. 4.
ch. 5. 13. & 7.
11.

loweth after the east wind. The East wind in Palestine, coming from Arabia and the far East, over large tracts of sandy waste, is parching, scorching, destructive to vegetation, oppressive to man, violent and destructive on the sea¹, and, by land also, having the force of the whirlwind. ² *The East wind carrieth him away and he departeth, and as a whirlwind hurleth him out of his place.* In leaving God and following idols, Ephraim fed on what is unsatisfying, and chased after what is destructive. If a hungry man were to feed on wind, it would be light food. If a man could overtake the East wind, it were his destruction. Israel ³ *fed on wind*, when he sought by gifts to win one who could aid him no more than the wind; he chased the East wind, when, in place of the gain which he sought, he received from the patron whom he had adopted, no slight loss. Israel sought for the scorching wind, when it could betake itself under the shadow of God. ⁴ *The scorching wind is the burning of calamities, and the consuming fire of affliction.*

He increaseth lies and desolation. Unrepented sins and their punishment are, in God's government, linked together; so that to multiply sin is, in fact, to multiply desolation. Sin and punishment are bound together, as cause and effect. Man overlooks what he does not see. Yet not the less does he ⁵ *treasure up wrath against the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.* ⁶ *Lying will signify false speaking, false dealing, false belief, false opinions, false worship, false pretences for color thereof, false hopes, or relying on things that will deceive.* In all these kinds, was Ephraim at that time guilty, adding one sort of lying to another.

They do make a covenant with the Assyrians and oil is carried into Egypt. Oil was a chief product of Palestine, whence it is called ⁶ *a land of oil olive*; and oil with balm was among its chief exports to Tyre⁷. It may also include precious ointments, of which it was the basis. As an export of great value, it stands for all other presents, which Hoshea

Assyrians, and °oil is carried into Egypt.

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2 °The LORD hath also
a controversy with Judah,
and will †punish Jacob
according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

° Is. 30. 6.
& 57. 9.
† ch. 4. 1.
Mic. G. 2.
† Heb. visit upon.

sent to So, King of Egypt. Ephraim, threatened by God, looked first to the Assyrian, then to Egypt, to strengthen itself. Having dealt falsely with God, he dealt falsely with man. First, he made covenant with Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; then, finding the tribute, the price of his help, burdensome to him, he broke that covenant, by sending to Egypt. Seeking to make friends out of God, Ephraim made the more powerful, the Assyrian, the more his enemy, by seeking the friendship of Egypt; and God executed His judgments through those, by whose help they had hoped to escape them.

2. *The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob.* The guilt of Judah was not open apostasy, nor had he filled up the measure of his sins. Of him, then, God saith only, that He had a controversy with him, as our Lord says to the Angel of the Church of Pergamos⁸, *I have a few things against thee. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against thee with the sword of My mouth.* Of Ephraim, whose sin was complete, He says, that the Lord is to punish. God had set His mind, as we say, on punishing him; He had (so to speak) set Himself to do it⁹. Jacob, like Israel, is here the name for the chief part of Israel, i. e. the ten tribes. Our Lord uses the same gradation in speaking of different degrees of evil-speaking¹⁰; *Whosoever of you is angry without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.* ¹¹ *The justice of God falls more severely on those who degenerate from a holy parent, than on those who have no incitement to good from the piety of their home.* To amplify this, ¹² *The Prophet explains what good things Jacob received, to shew both the mercy of God to Jacob, and the hardness of Ephraim towards God. While Jacob was yet in his mother's womb, he took his brother by the heel, not by any strength of his own, but by the mercy of God, Who knows and loves those whom he hath predestinated.*

¹ Ps. xlviii. 7. ² Job xxvii. 21. See Jer. xviii. 17.
³ Psa.
⁴ S. Cyr.
⁵ Rom. ii. 5.

⁶ Deut. viii. 8.

⁷ Ezek. xxvii. 17. See ab. ii. 8.
⁸ Rev. ii. 12, 16.
⁹ The force of 7.
¹⁰ S. Matt. v. 22. ¹¹ Osor. ¹² S. Jer.

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3 ¶ He took his brother
by the heel in the womb,
and by his strength he
† *Gen. 25. 26. Heb. was a prince, or, behaved himself princely.* † *Gen. 32, 24, &c.* had power with God:

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4 Yea, he had power
over the angel, and pre-
vailed: he wept, and made
supplication unto him: he

3. *He took his brother by the heel in the womb.* Whether or no the act of Jacob was beyond the strength, ordinarily given to infants in the womb, the meaning of the act was beyond man's wisdom to declare. Whence the Jews paraphrased, "Was it not predicted of your father Jacob, before he was born, that he should become greater than his brother?" Yet this was not fulfilled until more than 500 years afterwards, nor completely until the time of David. These gifts were promised to Jacob out of the free mercy of God, antecedent to all deserts. But Jacob, thus chosen without desert, shewed forth the power of faith; *By his strength he had power with God.* "The strength by which he did this, was God's strength, as well as that by which God contended with him; yet it is well called *his*, as being by God given to him. Yet he had power with God, God so ordering it, that the strength which was in Jacob, should put itself forth with greater force, than that in the assumed body, whereby He so dealt with Jacob. God, as it were, bore the office of two persons, shewing in Jacob more strength than He put forth in the Angel." "By virtue of that faith in Jacob, it is related that God could not prevail against him. He could not because He would not overthrow his faith and constancy. By the touch in the hollow of his thigh, He but added strength to his faith, shewing him Who it was Who wrestled with him, and that He willed to bless him." For thereon Jacob said those words which have become a proverb of earnest supplication, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me, and, I have seen God, face to face, and my life is preserved.* "He was strengthened by the blessing of Him Whom he overcame."

4. *He wept and made supplication unto Him.* Jacob's weeping is not mentioned by Moses. Hosea then knew more than Moses related. He could not have gathered it out of Moses; for Moses relates the words of earnest supplication; yet the tone is that of one, by force of earnest energy, wresting, as it were, the blessing from God, not of one weeping. Yet Hosea adds this, in harmony with Moses. For "vehement desires and earnest petitions frequently issue in tears." "To implore means to ask with tears." "Jacob, learning, that God Himself thus deigned to deal with him, might well out of amazement and wonder,

out of awful respect to Him, and in earnest desire of a blessing, pour out his supplication with tears." Herein he became an image of Him, *Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.*⁶

"This which he saith, *he prevailed*, sub-joining, *he wept and made supplication*, describes the strength of penitents; for in truth they are strong by weeping earnestly and praying perseveringly for the forgiveness of sins, according to that, *From the days of John the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* Whosoever so imitates the Patriarch Jacob, who wrestled with the Angel, and, as a conqueror, extorted a blessing from him, he, of whatever nation he be, is truly Jacob, and deserveth to be called Israel." "Yea, herein is the unconquerable might of the righteous, this his wondrous wrestling, herein his glorious victories, in glowing longings, assiduous prayers, joyous weeping. Girt with the might of holy orison, they strive with God, they wrestle with His judgment, and will not be overcome, until they obtain from His goodness all they desire, and extort it, as it were, by force, from His hands."

He found him in Bethel. This may mean either that "God found Jacob," or that "Jacob found God;" which are indeed one and the same thing, since we find God, when He has first found us. God found, i.e. made Himself known to Jacob twice in this place; first, when he was going toward Haran, when he saw the vision of the ladder and the angels of God ascending and descending, and the Lord stood above it and said, *I am the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac;* and Jacob first called the place *Bethel*; secondly, on his return, when God spake with him, giving him the name of Israel. Both revelations of God to Jacob are probably included in the words, *He found him in Bethel*, since, on both occasions, God did find him, and come to him, and he found God. In Bethel, where God found Jacob, Israel deserted Him, setting up the worship of the calves; yea, he deserted God the more there, because of God's mercy to his forefather, desecrating to false worship the place which had been consecrated by the revelation of the true God; and

¹ Jon. ² Poc. ³ Gen. xxxii. 26, 30. ⁴ S. Jer. ⁵ Implorare est fletu rogare. Imploro is formed from ploro, which relation is retained in the French

Implorer, pleurer, pleurs. So we have cry (i.e. weep) and cry on him, [R. Glouc.] cry unto. ⁶ Heb. v. 7. ⁷ Rup. ⁸ Osor.

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found him in⁵ Beth-el,
and there he spake with
us;
⁵ Gen. 28.-12, 19,
& 35. 9, 10, 15.

5 Even the LORD God
of hosts; the LORD is his
memorial.
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⁶ Ex. 3. 15.

choosing it the rather, because it had been so consecrated.

And there He spake with us. For what He said to Jacob, He said not to Jacob only, nor for Jacob's sake alone, but, in him, He spake to all his posterity, both the children of his body and the children of his faith. Thus it is said¹, *There did we rejoice in Him*, i. e. we, their posterity, rejoiced in God there, where He so delivered our forefathers, and, ² *Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.* And S. Paul saith, that what was said to Abraham, *therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, was not written for his sake alone, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead*³. There He spake with us, how, in our needs, we should seek and find Him. In loneliness, apart from distractions, in faith, rising in proportion to our fears, in persevering prayer, in earnestness, which "clings so fast to God, that if God would cast us into Hell, He should, (as one said) Himself go with us, so should Hell not be Hell to us," God is sought and found.

5. *Even the Lord God of Hosts, the Lord is His memorial.* The word, here as elsewhere, translated and written LORD, is the special and, so to say, the proper Name of God, that which He gave to Himself, and which declares His Being. God Himself authoritatively explained its meaning. When Moses inquired of Him, what he should say to Israel, when they should ask him, *what is the Name of the God of their fathers*, Who, he was to tell them, had sent him to them⁴, *God said, I AM THAT I AM; thus shalt thou say, I AM (EHYEH) hath sent me unto you; and God said again unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel; The LORD [lit HE IS, YeHeVeH⁵,] the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; This is My Name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.* I AM, expresses Self-existence; He Who Alone IS. I AM THAT

I AM, expresses His Unchangeableness, the necessary attribute of the Self-existent, Who, since HE IS, ever IS all which He IS. "To Be," says S. Augustine⁶, "is a name of unchangeableness. For all things which are changed, cease to be what they were, and begin to be what they were not. True Being, pure Being, genuine Being, no one hath, save He Who changeth not. He hath Being to Whom it is said, *Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed, but Thou art the Same.* What is, I AM THAT I AM, but, I am Eternal? What is, I AM THAT I AM, save, I cannot be changed? No creature, no heaven, no earth, no angel, nor Power, nor Throne, nor Dominion, nor Principality. This then being the name of eternity, it is somewhat more, than He vouchsafed to him a name of mercy, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.* That, He is in Himself, this, to us. If he willed only to be That which he is in Himself, what should we be? Since Moses understood, when it was said to him, I AM THAT I AM, HE Who IS hath sent me unto you, he believed that this was much to men, he saw that this was far removed from men. For whose hath understood, as he ought, That which IS, and which truly IS, and, in whatever degree, hath even transiently, as by a lightning flash, been irradiated by the light of the One True Essence, sees himself far below, in the utmost farness of removal and unlikeness." This, the Self-existent, the Unchangeable, was the meaning of God's ancient Name, by which He was known to the Patriarchs, although they had not in act seen His unchangeableness; for theirs was a life of faith, hoping for what they saw not. The word, HE IS, when used of Him by His creatures, expresses the same which He says of Himself, I AM. This He willed to be *His memorial forever*. This the way in which He willed that we should believe in Him and think of Him as HE Who IS, the Self-existing, the Self-Same.

The way of pronouncing that Name is lost⁷. The belief has continued, wherever

or *Yehveh* (after the analogy of יְהוֹה) or less probably, *Yehveh* like יְהוֹה. Another pronunciation, *Yahveh* or *Yahveh*, might seem to be favored by Theodore's statement, that the Samaritans pronounced it IABE (Quest. 15. in Exod.); but on the other hand the Samaritans, like the Galileans, had probably a broader pronunciation than the Jews.

⁶ Serm. 7. 27.
⁷ The popular pronunciation *Jehovah*, is altogether a mistake. When a word in the text is not read by the Jews, (and this ceased to be read before the vowels were written) the vowels belong, not to the word itself, but to another, which is to be substituted for it. Those placed under this word, יְהוֹה, vary.

¹ Ps. lxxvi. 6.

² Heb. vii. 9. 10.

³ Rom. iv. 23. 4.

⁴ Ex. iii. 13-15.

⁵ יְהוֹה "HE IS," from an old verb *"is,"* which exists in Chaldee and Syriac, and which in Hebrew became יְהוֹה, as יְהוֹה "lives" (whence the name of Eve יְהוֹה) became יְהוֹה. The old form remained in poetic language in the Imperative (Gen. xxvii. 19. Job xxxvii. 6. Is. xvi. 4.) and in the Participle, Eccl. ii. 22. Neh. vi. 6. The root יְהוֹה must have been almost out of use in the time of Moses, since the word is explained in Exodus by the use of the verb יְהוֹה, not by יְהוֹה. The vowels, by which the consonants are to be pronounced, must remain uncertain. It might be pronounced *Yihveh* (like יְהוֹה).

Before
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cir. 725. 6 'Therefore turn thou
to thy God: keep mercy
' ch. 14. 1. Mic. 6. 8.

and judgment, and ¹ wait
on thy God continually. Before
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the LORD is named. For by the Lord we mean the Unchangeable God. That belief is contradicted, whenever people use the name Jehovah, to speak of God, as though the belief in Him under the Old Testament differed from that of the New. Perhaps God allowed it to be lost, that people might not make so familiar with it, as they do with the word Jehovah, or use it irreverently and anti-Christianly, as some now employ other ways of pronouncing it. The Jews, even before the time of our Lord, ceased ordinarily to pronounce it. In the translations of the Old Testament, and in the Apocrypha, the words, "the Lord," were substituted for it. Jewish tradition states, that in later times the Name was pronounced in the Temple only, by the priests, on pronouncing the blessing commanded by God in the law¹. On the great Day of atonement, it was said that the High Priest pronounced it ten times², and that when the people heard it, they fell on their faces, saying, "Blessed be the glorious name of His kingdom for ever and ever³." They say, however, that in the time of Simon the Just [i. e. Jaddua⁴.] who died about B. C. 322, the High Priests themselves disused it, for fear of its being pronounced by some irreverent person⁵.

Our Lord Himself sanctioned the disuse of it, (as did the inspired Apostles yet more frequently,) since, in quoting places of the Old Testament in which it occurs, He uses instead of it the Name, *the Lord*⁶. It stands, throughout the Old Testament, as the Name which speaks of God in relation to His people, that He ever IS; and, since He ever IS, then He IS unchangeably to us, all which He ever was, *The Same, yesterday and to-day and for ever*⁷.

He then Who appeared to Jacob, and Who, in Jacob, spake to all the posterity of Jacob, was God; whether it was (as almost all the early fathers thought⁸), God the Son, Who thus appeared in human form to the Patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, and in the time of the Judges, under the name of the

Angel of the Lord, or whether it was the Father. God Almighty thus accustomed man to see the form of Man, and to know and believe that it was God. He it was, the Prophet explains, *the Lord*, i. e. the Self-existent, the Unchangeable, *Who was, and is and is to come*⁹, Who Alone IS, and from Whom are all things, "the Fullness of Being, both of His own, and of all His creatures, the boundless Ocean of all which is, of wisdom, of glory, of love, of all good."

The Lord of Hosts, i. e. of all things visible and invisible, of the angels and heavenly spirits, and of all things animate and inanimate, which, in the history of the Creation, are called *the host of heaven and earth*¹⁰, the one host of God. This was the way in which He willed to be had in mind, thought of, remembered. On the one hand then, as relates to Ephraim's sin, not by the calves, nor by any other created thing, did He will to be represented to men's minds or thoughts. On the other hand, as relates to God's mercies, since He, who revealed Himself to Jacob, was the unchangeable God, Israel had no cause to fear, if he returned to the faith of Jacob, whom God there accepted. Whence it follows;

6. *Therefore turn thou to thy God* [lit. *And thou, thou shalt turn so as to lean on thy God*¹¹.] *And thou* unlike, he would say, as thou art to thy great forefather, now at least, *turn to thy God*; hope in Him, as Jacob hoped; and thou too shalt be accepted. God was the Same. They then had only to turn to Him in truth, and they too would find Him, such as Jacob their father had found Him, and then *trust in him continually*. *Mercy and judgment* include all our duty to our neighbor, love and justice. The Prophet selects the duties of the second table, as Micah also places them first¹², *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?* and our Lord chooses those same commandments, in answer to the rich young man, who asked him, *What shall I do, in order to enter into life*¹³? For men

They direct mostly, that the word *Adonai*, Lord, is to be read for it. But if this has just occurred, other vowels are placed, directing that it should be read *Elohim*, God. The placing of the vowels under the word are an indication, not that they are to be used with the word, but that they are not to be used with it. The vowels of a textual reading, when there is also a marginal reading, are always to be supplied by conjecture. It is better to own ignorance, how this name of God is pronounced, than to use the name Jehovah, which is certainly wrong, or any other which can only be conjectural. The subject is fully discussed in the disputation, edited by Richard, Doctus Exercit. de nom. Jeh., esp. those of Drusius, Amama and Buxtorf.

¹ Num. vi. 24-26. see Massecheth Sota in Amama, l. c. p. 173.

² Massecheth Yoma, f. 39. p. 2. ib. p. 177.

³ Ib. prec. 356. 2 Drus. ib. p. 51.

⁴ Drus. Tetr. c. 10. ib. 59.

⁵ Maim. Yad Chazaka, c. 14. § 10. Ib. 174. Drus. p. 59.

⁶ S. Matt. iv. 7. from Deut. vi. 16, and S. Matt. xxii. 44. from Ps. cx. 1. ⁷ Heb. xiii. 8.

⁸ See Bp. Bull. Def. Fid. Nic. i. 1. 3-8. 12. ii. 4. 5. Tertullian de Præser. § 13. p. 447. note. Oxf. Tr. p. 463. ed. 2.] S. Athan. de Conc. Arim. p. 129 note q. Orat. l. c. Arian. pp. 235. 418. note h. Oxf. Tr.

⁹ Rev. i. 4. 8.

¹⁰ Lap. ¹¹ Gen. ii. 1.

¹² נְאֻלֶּהךָ תְּשׁוּב ¹³ vi. 8. ¹⁴ S. Matt. xix. 17.

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Or, Canaan: See Ezek. 16. 3. Prov. 11. 1. Amos 8. 5. Or, deceive.

7 ¶ *He is* || a merchant,
the balances of deceit are
in his hand: he loveth to
|| oppress.

8 And Ephraim said,

cannot deceive themselves so easily about their duties to their neighbor, as about their duty to God. It was in love to his neighbor that the rich young man failed.

Thou shalt turn, i.e. it is commonly said, thou oughtest to turn; as our's has it, *turn*. But it may also include the promise that, at one time, *Israel shall turn to the Lord*, as S. Paul says, *so shall all Israel be saved*.

And wait on thy God continually. If they did so, they should not wait in vain. "This word, *continually*, hath no small weight in it, shewing with what circumstances or properties their waiting or hope on God ought to be attended; that it ought to be on Him alone, on Him always, without doubting, fainting, failing, intermission or ceasing, in all occasions and conditions which may befall them, without exception of time, even in their adversity." "Turn to thy God," he saith, "wait on thy God," as the great ground of repentance and of trust. *God had avouched them for His peculiar people*², and they had avouched Him for their only God. He then was still their God, ready to receive them, if they would return to Him.

7. He is a merchant, or, indignantly, a merchant in whose hands are the balances of deceit! How could they love mercy and justice, whose trade was deceit, who weighed out deceit with their goods? False in their dealings, in their weights and measures, and, by taking advantage of the necessities of others, oppression also. Deceit is the sin of weakness, oppression is the abuse of power. Wealth does not give the power to use naked violence, but wealthy covetousness manifoldly grinds the poor. When for instance, wages are paid in necessities priced exorbitantly, or when artizans are required to buy at a loss at their masters' shops, what is it but the union of deceit and oppression? The trading world is full of oppression, scarcely veiled by deceit. *He loveth to oppress*. Deceit and oppression have, each, a devilish attractiveness to those practiced in them; deceit, as exercising cleverness, cunning, skill in overreaching, outwitting; oppression, as indulging self-will, caprice, love of power, insolence, and the like vices. The word merchant, as the Prophet spoke it, was *Canaan*³; merchants being so called, because the Canaanites or Phœnicians were the then great mer-

¹ Poe.

² Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.

³ Philostratus in Grot.

⁴ כַּנְעָנִי.

"Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: || in all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me † that were sin.

punishment of iniquity in whom is sin.

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"Zech. 11. 6. Rev. 3. 17. Or, all my labors suffice me not: he shall have † Heb. which.

chant-people, as astrologers were called Chaldeans. The Phœnicians were, in Homer's time, infamous for their griping in traffic. They are called "gnawers"⁴ and "money-lovers"⁵. To call Israel, *Canaan*, was to deny to him any title to the name of Israel, "reversing the blessing of Jacob, so that, as it had been said of Jacob, *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel*, he would in fact say, 'Thy name shall be called no more Israel, but *Canaan*'; as being, through their deeds, heirs, not to the blessings of Israel but to the curse of *Canaan*." So Ezekiel saith⁶, *Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite*.

8. And Ephraim said, *Yet am I become rich, lit. I am simply rich*. As if he said, "the only result of all this, with which the Prophets charge me, is that *I am become rich*: and since God thus prospers me, it is a sure proof that he is not displeased with me, that no iniquity can be found in me;" the ordinary practical argument of men, as long as God withholds His punishments, that their ways cannot be so displeasing to Him. With the men of this world, with its politicians, in trade, it is the one decisive argument: "I was in the right, for I succeeded." "It was a good speculation, for he gained thousands." "It was good policy; for, see its fruits." An answer, at which the heathen laughed, "the people hisses me, but I, I, safe at home, applaud myself, when the coin jingles in my chest." The heathen ridiculed it; Christians enact it. But in truth, the fact that God does not punish, is often the evidence of His extremest displeasure.

They shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin. The merchants of Ephraim continue their protest; "In all the toil of my hands, all my buying and selling, my bargains, contracts, they can bring no iniquity home to me," and then, in a tone of simple innocence, they add, *that were sin*, as though they could not do, what to do were sin. None suspect themselves less, than those intent on gain. The evil customs of other traders, the habits of trade, the seeming necessity for some frauds, the conventional nature of others, the minuteness of others, with their frequent repetition, blind the soul, until it sees no sin, while, with every smallest sale, "they sell their own souls into the bargain"⁸.

⁵ Od. xiv. 283. xv. 413.

⁷ Hor. Sat. i. 1. 66.

⁶ xvi. 3.

⁸ South's Sermons.

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9 And ^a I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt ^b will yet

^a ch. 13. 4.
^b Lev. 23. 42, 43.
Neh. 8. 17. Zech. 14. 16.

9. And I, the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt. God, in few words, comprises whole centuries of blessings, all, from the going out of Egypt to that very day, all the miracles in Egypt, in the wilderness, under Joshua, the Judges; one stream of benefits it had been, which God had poured out upon them from first to last. The penitent sees in one glance, how God had been his God, from his birth till that hour, and how he had all along offended God.

Will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles. The feast of tabernacles was the yearly remembrance of God's miraculous guidance and support of Israel through the wilderness. It was the link, which bound on their deliverance from Egypt to the close of their pilgrim-life and their entrance into their rest. The passage of the Red Sea, like Baptism, was the beginning of God's promises. By it Israel was saved from Egypt and from bondage, and was born to be a people of God. Yet, being the beginning, it was plainly not the completion; nor could they themselves complete it. Enemies, more powerful than they, had to be dispossessed; the great and terrible wilderness, the fiery serpents and scorpions, and the land of exceeding drought, where was no water¹, had to be surmounted; no food was there, no water, for so vast a multitude. It was a time of the visible Presence of God. He promised²; I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. He brought them forth water out of the rock of flint, and fed them with Manna which, He says, thy fathers knew not³. Thy raiment, He appeals to them, waxed not old, nor did thy foot swell these forty years⁴; thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot; ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God⁵. It was a long trial-time, in which they were taught entire dependence upon God; a time of sifting, in which God proved His faithfulness to those who persevered. Standing there between the beginning and the end of the accomplishment of God's promise to Abraham and to them, it was a type of His whole guidance of His people at all times. It was a pledge that God would lead His own, if often by a way which they knew not⁶, yet to rest, with Him. The yearly commemoration of it was not only a thanksgiving

make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

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ing for God's past mercies; it was a confession also of their present relation to God, that *here we have no continuing city*¹; that they still needed the guidance and support of God; and that their trust was not in themselves, nor in man, but in Him. This they themselves saw. ² When they said, 'Leave a fixed habitation, and dwell in a chance abode,' they meant, that the command to dwell in tabernacles was given, to teach us, that no man must rely on the height or strength of his house, or on its good arrangements though it abound in all good; nor may he rely on the help of any man, not though he were lord and king of the whole earth, but must trust in Him by Whose word the worlds were made. For with Him alone is power and faithfulness, so that, wheresoever any man may place his trust, he shall receive no consolation from it, since in God alone is refuge and trust, as it is said, *Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, mercy embraceth him on every side, and I will say unto the Lord, my Refuge and my Fortress, my God, in Him will I trust.*³

The feast of Tabernacles was also a yearly thanksgiving for the mercies with which God had crowned the year. The joy must have been even the greater, since it followed, by five days only, after the mournful day of Atonement, its rigid fast from evening to evening, and its confession of sin. Joy is greater when ushered in by sorrow; sorrow for sin is the condition of joy in God. The Feast of Tabernacles was, as far it could be, a sort of Easter after Lent. At the time when Israel rejoiced in the good gifts of the year, God bade them express, in act, their fleeting condition in this life. It must have been a striking confession of the slight tenure of all earthly things, when their kings and great men, their rich men and those who lived at ease, had all, at the command of God, to leave their ceiled houses, and dwell for seven days in rude booths, constructed for the season, pervious in some measure to the sun and wind, with no fixed foundation, to be removed when the festival was passed. "Because," says a Jewish writer⁴, "at the time of the gathering of the increase from the field, man wishes to go from the field to his house to make a fixed abode there, the law was anxious, lest on account of this fixed abode, his heart should be lifted up at hav-

¹ Deut. viii. 15.

² Deut. viii. 15, 16.

³ Ib. xxix. 5, 6.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 14. comp. xi. 9, 10.

⁵ Ex. xxiii. 20.

⁶ Ib. 4.

⁷ Is. xlii. 16.

⁸ Menorat Hammaor, f. 39, col. 2 in Dachs Sueca, pp. 527, 8.

⁹ R. Sal. Ephr. Kell Yakar in Lev. i. c. in Dachs, p. 546.

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2 Kgs. 17. 13.

10 ² I have also spoken
by the prophets, and I have
multiplied visions, and used

ing found a sort of palace, and he should *wax fat and kick*. Therefore it is written, *all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths*. Who-so begins to think himself a citizen in this world, and not a foreigner, him God biddeth, leaving his ordinary dwelling, to remove into a temporary lodging, in order that, leaving these thoughts, he may learn to acknowledge that he is only a stranger in this world and not a citizen, in that he dwells as in a stranger's hut, and so should not attribute too much to the shadow of his beams, but *dwell under the shadow of the Almighty*.¹

Every year, the law was publicly read in the feast. Ephraim was living clean contrary to all this. He boasted in his wealth, justified himself on the ground of it, ascribed it and his deliverance from Egypt to his idols. He would not keep the feast, as alone God willed it to be kept. While he existed in his separate kingdom, it could not be. Their political existence had to be broken, that they might be restored.

God then conveys the notice of the impending punishment in words which promised the future mercy. He did not, then, make them to dwell in tabernacles. For all their service of Him was out of their own mind, contrary to His Will, displeasing to Him. This, then, "I will yet make thee dwell in tabernacles," implies a distant mercy, beyond and distinct from their present condition. Looking on beyond the time of the Captivity, He says that they shall yet have a time of joy, *as in the days of the solemn feast*. God would give them a new deliverance, but out of a new captivity.

The feast of Tabernacles typifies this our pilgrim-state, the life of simple faith in God, for which God provides; poor in this world's goods, but rich in God. The Church militant dwells, as it were, in tabernacles; hereafter, we hope to be received into everlasting habitations, in the Church triumphant.

10. I have also spoken by the prophets, lit. upon the prophets, the revelation coming down from heaven upon them. Somewhat like this, is what Ezekiel says, *the hand of the Lord was strong upon me*¹. God declares, in what way He had been their God from the land of Egypt. Their ignorance of Him was without excuse; for He had ever taught them, although they ever sought the false prophets, and persecuted the true. He taught them continually and in divers ways, if so be any impression might be made upon them.

¹ iii. 14, etc.

² Such is the force of the Heb. אֶתְּרָקָה.

² Poc.

similitudes, † by the ministry of the prophets.

11 ² Is there iniquity in

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† Heb. by the
hand.
ch. 6. 1. & 6. 8.

He taught them, either in plain words, or in the visions which He multiplied to the prophets; or in the similitudes or parables, which He taught through their ministry. In the vision, God is understood to have represented the things to come, as a picture, to the prophet's mind, "whether the picture were presented to his bodily eyes, or impressed on his imagination, and that, either in a dream, or without a dream." The similitude, which God says that He repeatedly, continually, used², seems to have been the parable, as when God compared His people to a vine, Himself to the Lord of the vineyard, or when He directed His prophets to do acts which should shadow forth some truth, as in the marriage of Hosea himself. God had said to Aaron, that He would thus make Himself known by the prophets. "If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all My house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches. The dark speech in Moses answers to the similitude of Hosea; the vision and dream in Moses are comprehended in visions, as used by Hosea. The prophet Joel also says³, *your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*. So little ground then have they, who speak of the visions of Daniel and Zechariah, as if they belonged to a later age. "I have instructed," God saith, "men of God, to form thee to piety, enlightening their minds with manifold knowledge of the things of God. And because the light of Divine wisdom could not otherwise shine on men placed here below in the prison-house of the body, I had them taught through figures and corporeal images, that, through them, they might rise to the incorporeal, and receive some knowledge of Divine and heavenly things. And thou, how didst thou requite me? How didst thou shew thy teachableness? It follows;"

11. Is there iniquity in Gilead? The Prophet asks the question, in order to answer it the more peremptorily. He raises the doubt, in order to crush it the more impressively. Is there iniquity in Gilead? Alas, there was nothing else. Surely they are vanity, or, strictly, they have become merely vanity. As he said before, *they become abominations like their love*. "For such as men make their idols, or conceive their God to

⁴ Num. xii. 6-8.

⁵ ii. 28.

⁶ Osor.

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ch. 4. 15. & 9. 15.	Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in ¹ Gilgal: yea, ² their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.	13 ³ And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.	Ex. 12. 50, 51. & 13. 3.
Amos 4. 4. & 5. 5.		14 ⁴ Ephraim provoked him to anger ⁵ most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his ⁶ blood upon him, ⁷ and his ⁸ reproach shall his Lord return unto him.	Ps. 77. 20. Is. 63. 11. Mic. 6. 4.
ch. 8. 11. & 10. 1.	12 And Jacob ⁹ fled into the country of Syria, and Israel ¹⁰ served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.		2 Kgs. 17. 11-18.
Gen. 28. 5. Deut. 26. 5.			Heb. with bitternesses. Heb. bloods. See Ezek. 18. 13. & 24. 7. 8.
Gen. 29. 20, 28.			Dan. 11. 18. Deut. 28. 37.

be, such they become themselves. As then he who worships God with a pure heart, is made like unto God, so they who worship stocks and stones, or who make passions and lusts their idols, lose the mind of men and become like the beasts which perish." In *Gilgal* they have sacrificed oxen. Gilead represents all the country on its side, the East of Jordan; *Gilgal*, all on its side, the West of Jordan. In both, God had signally shewn forth His mercies; in both, they dishonored God, sacrificing to idols, and offering His creatures, as a gift to devils.

Yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field. Their altars are like the heaps of stones, from which men clear the ploughed land, in order to fit it for cultivation, as numerous, as profuse, as worthless, as desolate. Their altars they were, not God's. They did, (as sinners do,) in the service of devils, what, had they done it to God, would have been accepted, rewarded, service. Full often they sacrificed oxen¹; they threw great state into their religion; they omitted nothing which should shed around it an empty shew of worship. They multiplied their altars, their sins, their ruins; many altars over against His one altar; "rude heaps of stones, in His sight; and such they should become, no one stone being left in order upon another." In contrast with their sins and ingratitude, the Prophet exhibits two pictures, the one, of the virtues of the Patriarch whose name they bore, from whom was the beginning of their race; the other, of God's love to them, in that beginning of their national existence, when God brought those who had been a body of slaves in Egypt, to be His own people.

12. And Jacob fled into the country of Syria. Jacob chose poverty and servitude rather than marry an idolatress of Canaan. He knew not whence, except from God's bounty and Providence, he should have bread to eat, or raiment to put on²; with his staff alone he

passed over Jordan⁴. His voluntary poverty, bearing even unjust losses⁵, and repaying the things which he never took, reproveth their dishonest traffic; his trustfulness in God, their mistrust; his devotedness to God, their alienation from Him, and their devotion to idols. And as the conduct was opposite, so was the result. Ill-gotten riches end in poverty; stable wealth is gained, not by the cupidity of man, but by the good pleasure of God. Jacob, having become two bands, trusting in God and enriched by God, returned from Syria to the land promised to him by God; Israel, distrusting God and enriching himself, was to return out of the land which the Lord his God had given him, to Assyria, amid the loss of all things.

13. By a Prophet was he preserved or kept. Jacob kept sheep out of love of God, sooner than unite himself with one, alien from God; his posterity was kept like a sheep by God, as the Psalmist said⁶, *He led His people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron*. They were kept from all evil and want and danger, by the direct power of God; kept from all the might of Pharaoh in Egypt and the Red Sea, "not through any power of their own, but by the ministry of a single prophet; kept, in that great and terrible wilderness⁷, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where was no water, but what God brought out of the rock of flint; no bread, but what he sent them from heaven." All this, God did for them by a single Prophet; they had many Prophets, early and late, calling upon them in the name of God, but they would not hearken unto them.

14. Ephraim provoked the Lord most bitterly, lit. with bitternesses, i. e. with most heinous sins, such as are most grievously displeasing to God, and were a most bitter requital of all His goodness. Wherefore He shall leave [or, cast] his blood [lit. bloods] upon him. The plural bloods⁸ expresses the manifoldness of

¹ The force of נָחַם. ² POC. ³ Gen. xxviii. 20.

⁴ Ib. xxxii. 10.

⁵ Ib. xxxi. 39.

⁶ Ps. lxxvii. 20.

⁷ Deut. viii. 15.

⁸ רַב־כִּסִּים. When David said to the Amalekite, Thy

bloods be upon thy head, 2 Sam. i. 16. it was the blood-guiltiness in slaying Saul, which he had imputed to himself. When the spies said, his blood [sing.] be upon his head, (Josh. ii. 19.) they meant, let himself and no other be guilty of the loss of his life.

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CHAPTER XIII.

1 *Ephraim's glory, by reason of idolatry, vanisheth.* 5 *God's anger for their unkindness.* 9 *A promise of God's mercy.* 15 *A judgment for rebellion.*

the bloodshed. It is not used in Holy Scripture of mere guilt. Ephraim had shed blood profusely, so that it ran like water in the land¹. He had sinned with a high hand against God, in destroying man made in the image of God. Amid that bloodshed, had been the blood not of the innocent only, but of those whom God sent to rebuke them for their idolatry, their rapine, their bloodshed. *Jezabel cut off the prophets of the Lord*², as far as in her lay, with a complete excision. Ephraim thought his sins past; they were out of his sight; he thought that they were out of God's also; but they were laid up with God; and God, the Prophet says, would cast them down upon him, so that they would crush him.

And his reproach shall his Lord return unto him. For the blood which he had shed, should his own blood be shed; for the reproaches which he had in divers ways cast against God or brought upon Him, he should inherit reproach. Those who rebel against God, bring reproach on Him by their sins, reproach Him by their excuses for their sins, reproach Him in those whom He sends to recall them from their sins, reproach Him for chastening them for their sins. All who sin against the knowledge of God, bring reproach upon Him by acting sinfully against that knowledge. So Nathan says to David³, *Thou hast given much occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme.* The reproachful words of the enemies of God are but the echo of the opprobrious deeds of His unfaithful servants. The reproach is therefore, in an especial manner, *their reproach* who caused it. All Israel's idolatries had this aggravation. Their worship of the calves or of Baal or of any other gods of the nations, was a triumph of the false gods over God. Then, all sin must find some plea for itself, by impugning the wisdom or goodness of God who forbade it. Jeroboam, and Ephraim by adhering to Jeroboam's sin, reproached God, as though the going up to Jerusalem was a hard service. *It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.* "It was an open injury and reproach to God, to attribute to dead lifeless things those great and wonderful things done by Him for them." All the reproach, which they, in these ways, brought,

¹ See ab. iv. 2. v. 2.

² 1 Kings xviii. 4.

² Sam. xii. 14.

³ S. Cyr.

³ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

WHEN Ephraim spake
trembling, he exalted
himself in Israel; but

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* when he offended in Baal, * he died.

Kgs. 17. 18. 18.
ch. 11. 2.

or cast upon God, he says, *his Lord shall return or restore to them.* Their's it was; He would give it back to them, as He says⁴, *Them that honor Me, I will honor; and they that despise Me, shall be lightly esteemed.* Truly shame and reproach have been for centuries the portion of God's unfaithful people. To those who are lost, He gives back their reproach, in that they rise to reproaches⁵ and everlasting abhorrence⁶. It is an aggravation of this misery, that He Who shall give back to him his reproach, had been his God. Since his God was against him, who could be for him? "For whither should we go for refuge, save to Him? If we find wrath with Him, with whom should we find ruth?" Ephraim did not, the sinner will not, allow God to be his God in worship and service and love: but whether he willed or no, God would remain his Lord. He was, and might still have been their Lord for good; they would not have Him so, and so they should find Him still their Lord, as an Avenger, returning their own evil to them.

XIII. I. *When Ephraim spake trembling,* i. e. probably "there was trembling." "Ephraim was once very awful, so as, while he spake, the rest of the tribes were ready to tremble." The prophet contrasts two conditions of Ephraim, of prosperity, and destruction. His prosperity he owed to the undeserved mercy of God, Who blessed him for Joseph's sake; his destruction, to his own sin. There is no period recorded, *when Ephraim spake tremblingly*, i. e. in humility. Pride was his characteristic, almost as soon as he had a separate existence as a tribe⁷. Under Joshua, it could not be called out, for Ephraim gained honor, when Joshua, one of themselves, became the captain of the Lord's people. Under the Judges, their pride appeared. Yet God tried them, by giving them their hearts' desire. They longed to be exalted, and He satisfied them, if so be they would thus serve Him. They had the chief power, and were a terror to Judah. *He exalted himself,* (or perhaps *he was exalted*), *in Israel; but when he offended in Baal he died; lit. and he offended in Baal and died.* He abused the goodness of God; his sin followed as a consequence of God's goodness to him. God raised him, and he offended. The alliance with a king of Tyre

⁴ Dan. xii. 2.

⁵ The word is the same as in Is. lxvi. 24.

⁶ Bp. Hall.

⁷ See on v. 5.

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2 And now † they sin
more and more, and † have
made them molten images
of their silver, and idols
according to their own un-

† Heb. they
add to sin.
b ch. 2. 8. & 8. 4.

derstanding, all of it the
work of the craftsmen:
they say of them, Let || the
men that sacrifice † kiss the
calves.

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1 Or, the sacri-
ficers of men.
c 1 Kgs. 10. 18.

and Sidon, which brought in the worship of Baal, was a part of the worldly policy of the kings of Israel¹. *As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took to wife the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.* The twenty-two years of Ahab's reign established the worship. The prophets of Baal became 450; the prophets of the kindred idolatry of Ashtoreth, or Astarte, became 400; Baal had his one central temple, large and magnificent², a rival of that of God. The prophet Elijah thought the apostacy almost universal; God revealed to him that He had reserved to Himself seven thousand in Israel. Yet these were all the knees which had not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which had not kissed him³.

And died. Death is the penalty of sin. Ephraim died spiritually. For sin takes away the life of grace, and separates from God, the true life of the soul, the source of all life. He "died more truly, than he who is dead and at rest." Of this death, our Lord says⁴, *Let the dead bury their dead*; and S. Paul⁵, *She who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.* He died also as a nation and kingdom, being sentenced by God to cease to be.

2. And now they sin more and more. Sin draws on sin. This seems to be a third stage in sin. First, under Jeroboam, was the worship of the calves. Then, under Ahab, the worship of Baal. Thirdly, the multiplying of other idols⁶, penetrating and pervading the private life, even of their less wealthy people. The calves were of gold; now they made them molten images of their silver, perhaps plated with silver. In Egypt, the mother of idolatry, it was common to gild idols, made of wood, stone, and bronze. The idolatry, then, had become more habitual, daily, universal. These idols were made of their silver; they themselves had had them molten out of it. Avaricious as they were⁷, they lavished their silver, to make them their gods. According to their own understanding, they had had them formed. They employed ingenuity and invention to multiply their idols. They despised the wisdom and commands of God Who forbid it. The rules for making and coloring the idols were as minute as those,

which God gave for His own worship. Idolatry had its own vast system, making the visible world its god and picturing its operations, over against the worship of God its Creator. But it was all, *their own understanding*. The conception of the idol lay in its maker's mind. It was his own creation. He devised, what his idol should represent; how it should represent what his mind imagined; he debated with himself, rejected, chose, changed his choice, modified what he had fixed upon; all according to his own understanding. Their own understanding devised it; the labor of the craftsmen completed it.

All of it the work of the craftsmen. What man could do for it, he did. But man could not breathe into his idols the breath of life; there was then no spirit, nor life, nor any effluence from any higher nature, nor any deity residing in them. From first to last it was all man's work; and man's own wisdom was its condemnation. The thing made must be inferior to its maker. God made man, inferior to Himself, but lord of the earth, and all things therein; man made his idol of the things of earth, which God gave him. It too then was inferior to its maker, man. He then worshiped in it, the conception of his own mind, the work of his own hands.

They say of them. Strictly, Of them, (i. e. of these things, such things, as these,) they, say, *Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.* The prophet gives the substance or the words of Jeroboam's edict, when he said, *It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem, behold thy gods, O Israel.* "Whoever would sacrifice, let him do homage to the calves." He would have calf-worship to be the only worship of God. Error, if it is strong enough, ever persecutes the truth, unless it can corrupt it. Idol-worship was striving to extirpate the worship of God, which condemned it. Under Ahab and Jezebel, it seemed to have succeeded. Elijah complains to God in His own immediate presence; *the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy Prophets with the sword; and I, even I, only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away*⁸. Kissing was an act of homage in the East, done upon the hand or the foot, the knees or shoulder. It was a

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 31. see Intro. p. 2.

² 2 Kings x. 21, 22, 25.

⁴ 8. Matt. viii. 22.

³ 1 Kings xix. 18.

⁵ 1 Tim. v. 6.

⁶ See 2 Kings xvii. 9, 10.

⁷ 1 Kings xix. 10, 14.

⁸ Above xii. 7, 8.

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3 Therefore they shall
be ⁴as the morning cloud,
and as the early dew that
passeth away, ⁵as the chaff
that is driven with the

⁴ ch. 6. 4.

⁵ Dan. 2. 35.

token of Divine honor, whether to an idol ¹or to God ². It was performed, either by actually kissing the image, or when the object could not be approached, (as the moon) kissing the hand ³, and so sending, as it were, the kiss to it. In the Psalm, it stands as a symbol of worship, to be shewn towards the Incarnate Son, when God should make Him King upon His holy hill of Zion.

3. *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud.* There is often a fair show of prosperity, out of God; but it is short-lived. "The third generation," says the heathen proverb, "never enjoys the ill-gotten gain." The highest prosperity of an ungodly state is often the next to its fall. Israel never so flourished, as under Jeroboam II. Bright and glistening with light is the *early dew*; in an hour it is gone, as if it had never been. Glowing and gilded by the sun is the *morning cloud*; while you admire its beauty, its hues have vanished. *The chaff* lay in one heap on the floor with the wheat. Its owner casts the mingled chaff and wheat against the strong wind; in a moment, it is driven by the wind out of the floor. While every grain falls to the ground, the chaff, light, dry, worthless, unsubstantial, is hurried along, unresisting, the sport of the viewless wind, and itself is soon seen no more. The *smoke*, one, seemingly solid, full, lofty, column, ascendeth, swelleth, welleteth, vanisheth ⁴. In form, it is as solid, when about to be dispersed and seen no more, as when it first issued out of the chimney. ⁵ It is raised aloft, and by that very uplifting swells into a vast globe; but the larger that globe is, the emptier; for from that unsolid, unbased, inflated greatness it vanisheth in air, so that its very greatness injures it. For the more it is uplifted, extended, diffused on all sides into a larger compass, so much the poorer it becometh, and faileth, and disappeareth. Such was the prosperity of Ephraim, a mere show, to vanish for ever. In the image of the chaff, the Prophet substitutes the whirlwind for the wind by which the Easterns used to winnow, in order to picture the violence with which they should be whirled away from their own land.

While these four emblems, in common, picture what is fleeting, two, the *early dew*

whirlwind out of the floor,
and as the smoke out of the
chimney.

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4 Yet 'I am the LORD
thy God from the land of

¹ Is. 43. 11.
ch. 12. 9.

and the *morning cloud*, are emblems of what is in itself good, but passing ⁶; the two others, the chaff and the smoke, are emblems of what is worthless. The dew and the cloud were temporary mercies on the part of God which should cease from them, "good in themselves, but to their evil, soon to pass away." If the dew have not, in its brief space, refreshed the vegetation, no trace of it is left. It gives way to the burning sun. If grace have not done its work in the soul, its day is gone. Such dew were the many prophets vouchsafed to Israel; such was Hosea himself, most brilliant, but soon to pass away. The chaff was the people itself, to be carried out of the Lord's land; the smoke, "its pride and its errors, whose disappearance was to leave the air pure for the household of God." ⁷ "So it is written ⁸; As the smoke is driven away, so shalt thou drive them away; as wax melteth before the fire, so shall the ungodly perish before the presence of God; and in Proverbs ⁹; As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation. Who although they live and flourish, as to the life of the body; yet spiritually they die, yea, and are brought to nothing; for by sin man became a nothing. Virtue makes man upright and stable; vice, empty and unstable. Whence Isaiah says ¹⁰, the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest; and Job ¹¹; If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away; then shalt thou be steadfast."

4. Yet, [lit. and] I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt. God was still the same God Who had sheltered them with His providence, ever since He had delivered them from Egypt. He had the same power and will to help them. Therefore *their duty* was the same, and their destruction arose, not from any change in Him, but from themselves. "God is the God of the ungodly, by creation and general Providence."

And thou shalt [i. e. oughtest to] know no God but Me, for [lit. and] there is not a Saviour but ME. "To be God and Lord and Saviour are incommunicable properties of God. Wherefore God often claimed these titles to Himself, from the time He revealed Himself to Israel. In the song of Moses, which they were commanded to rehearse, He says ¹², See now that I, I am He, and there is no

¹ 1 Kings xix. 18 and here.

² Job xxxi. 26, 27.

³ Id. in Ps. xxxvi. 8. li. § 12.

⁴ Ps. ii. 12.

⁵ 8. Aug.

⁶ Rup.

⁷ Dion.

⁸ Prov. x. 25.

⁹ xi. 14, 15.

¹⁰ Ps. lxxviii. 2.

¹¹ Is. liv. 20.

¹² Deut. xxxii. 30.

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Egypt, and thou shalt know
no god but me: for ² there
is no saviour beside me.
5 ¶ ¹ I did know thee in
the wilderness, 'in the land
† Heb. *droughts*. of † great drought.

God with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. Isaiah repeats this same ¹, *Is there a God besides Me? yea there is no God; I know not any; and* ² *There is no God else besides Me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none else. Look unto Me and be ye saved; for I am God and there is none else; and* ³, *I am the Lord, that is My Name; and My glory will I not give to another; neither My praise to graven images.* "That God and Saviour is Christ; God, because He created; Saviour, because, being made Man, He saved. Whence He willed to be called Jesus, i. e. Saviour. Truly beside Him, there is no Saviour; neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved ⁴." "It is not enough to recognize in God this quality of a Saviour. It must not be shared with any other. Whoso associates with God any power whatever to decide on man's salvation makes an idol, and introduces a new God."

5. *I did know thee in the wilderness.* "God so knew them, as to deserve to be known by them. By knowing them, He shewed how He ought to be acknowledged by them." *As we love God, because He first loved us, so we come to know and own God, having first been owned and known of Him.* God shewed His knowledge of them, by knowing and providing for their wants; He knew them in the wilderness, in the land of great drought, where the land yielded neither food nor water. He supplied them with the bread from heaven and with water from the flinty rock. He knew and owned them all by His Providence; He knew in approbation and love, and fed in body and soul those who, having been known by Him, knew and owned Him. "No slight thing is it, that He, Who knoweth all things and men, should, by grace, know us with that knowledge according to which He says to that one true Israelite, Moses ⁵, *thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name.* This we read to have been said to that one; but what He says to one, He says to all, whom now, before or since that time, He has chosen, being foreknown and predestinate; for He wrote the names of all in the book of life. All these elect are known

6 ⁶ According to their
pasture, so were they filled;
they were filled, and their
heart was exalted; there-
fore ⁷ have they forgotten
me.

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⁸ Deut. 8. 12.
14. & 32. 15.

⁹ ch. 8. 14.

in the wilderness, in the land of loneliness, in the wilderness of this world, where no one ever saw God, in the solitude of the heart and the secret of hidden knowledge, where God alone, beholding the soul tried by temptations, exercises and proves it, and accounting it, when running lawfully, worthy of His knowledge, professes that He knew it. To those so known, or named, He Himself saith in the Gospel, *rejoice, because your names are written in heaven* ¹⁰."

6. *According to their pasture, so were they filled.* "He implies that their way of being filled was neither good nor praiseworthy, in that he says, *they were filled according to their pastures.* What or of what kind were these their pastures? What they longed for, what they murmured for, and spoke evil of. For instance, when they said, *who will give us flesh to eat? We remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely. Our soul is dried up, because our eyes see nothing but this manna* ¹¹. Since they desired such things in such wise, and, desiring, were filled with them to loathing, well are they called 'their pastures.' For they sought God, not for Himself, but for them. They who follow God for Himself, things of this sort are not called their pastures, but the word of God is their pasture, according to that ¹², *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word, which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* These words, according to their pastures, convey strong blame. It is as if he said, 'in their eating and drinking, they received their whole reward for leaving the land of Egypt and receiving for a time the law of God.' It is sin, to follow God for such pastures. Blaming such in the Gospel, Jesus saith ¹³, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.* In like way, let all think themselves blamed, who attend the altar of Christ, not for the love of the sacraments which they celebrate, but only to live of the altar. This fullness is like that of which the Psalmist says ¹⁴, *The Lord gave them their desire and sent leanness withal into their bones.* For such fullness of the belly generates elation of spirit; such satiety produces forgetfulness of God." It is

¹ xlv. 8.

⁶ Acts iv. 12.

² xlv. 21, 2.

⁵ Ex. xxxiii. 17.

³ xlii. 8.

⁷ S. Luke x. 20.

⁴ Rup.

⁸ Num. xi. 4-6.

¹⁰ S. John vi. 26, 27.

⁹ Deut. viii. 3.

¹¹ Ps. cvi. 15.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

7 Therefore ^mI will be
unto them as a lion: as ^aa
leopard by the way will I
observe them :

^m Lam. 3. 10.
ch. 5. 14.
^m Jer. 5. 6.

more difficult to bear prosperity than adversity. They who, in the waste howling wilderness, had been retained in a certain degree of duty, forgot God altogether in the good land which He had given them. Whence it follows;

They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me. For they owned not that they had all from Him, therefore they were puffed up with pride, and forgot Him in and by reason of His gifts. This was the aggravation of their sin, with which Hosea often reproaches them¹. They abused God's gifts, (as Christians do now) against Himself, and did the more evil, the more good God was to them. God had forewarned them of this peril², *When thou shalt have eaten and be full, beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.* He pictured it to them with the song of Moses³; *Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxen fat; thou art grown thick; thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him;—thou hast forgotten God that formed thee.* They acted (as in one way or other do most Christians now,) as though God had commanded what He foretold of their evil deeds, or what He warned them against. ⁴*As their fathers did, so did they.* ⁵*They walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel which they made. They wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger. And the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets and by all the seers, saying, turn ye from your evil ways. And they hearkened not, and hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.* ⁶*The words are true also of those rich and ungrateful, whom God hath filled with spiritual or temporal goods. But they, being in honor, and having no understanding, abuse the gifts of God, and, becoming unworthy of the benefits which they have received, have their hearts uplifted and swollen with pride, despising others, glorying as though they had not received, and not obeying the commands of God. Of such the Lord saith in Isaiah, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me."*

7. *I will be unto them as a lion.* They had waxen fat, were full; yet it was, to become

Before
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cir. 725.

8 I will meet them ^oas
a bear *that is bereaved of*
her whelps, and will rend
the caul of their heart, and

^o 2 Sam. 17. 8.
Prov. 17. 12.

themselves a prey. Their wealth which they were proud of, which they abused, allured their enemies. To cut off all hopes of God's mercy, He says that He will be to them, as those creatures of His, which never spare. The fierceness of the lion, and the swiftness of the leopard, together portray a speedy inexorable chastisement. But what a contrast! He Who bare Israel in the wilderness like a Father, Who bare them on eagle's wings, Who drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love, He, the God of mercy and of love, their Father, Protector, Defender, Avenger, He it is Who will be their Destroyer.

8. *As a bear bereaved of her whelps.* The Syrian bear is fiercer than the brown bears to which we are accustomed. It attacks flocks¹, and even oxen². The fierceness of the she-bear, bereaved of her whelps, became a proverb³. ⁴*"They who have written on the nature of wild beasts, say that none is more savage than the she-bear, when she has lost her whelps or lacks food."* It blends wonderfully most touching love and fierceness. It tenderly protects its wounded whelps, reckless of its life, so that it may bring them off, and it turns fiercely on their destroyer. Its love for them becomes fury against their injurer. Much more shall God avenge those who destroy His sons and daughters, leading and enticing them into sin and destruction of body and soul.

Rend the caul of [what encloses] their heart, i. e. the pericardium. They had closed their hearts against God. Their punishment is pictured by the rending open of the closed heart, by the lion which is said to go instinctively straight to the heart, tears it out, and sucks the blood⁵. Fearful will it be in the Day of Judgment, when the sinner's heart is laid open, with all the foul, cruel, malicious, defiled, thoughts which it harbored and concealed, against the Will of God. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*⁶.

And there will I devour them. There, where they sinned, shall they be punished. *The wild beast shall tear them.* What God does, He does mostly through instruments, and what His instruments do, they do fulfilling His Will through their own blind will or appetite. Hitherto, He had spoken, as being

¹ Il. 5. lv. 7. x. 1.

² Deut. vi. 11, 12, add viii. 11, &c.

³ Ib. xxxii. 15, 18.

⁴ 2 Kings xvii. 8, 11, 13, 14.

⁵ Acts vii. 51.

⁶ Rib.

⁷ 1 Sam. xvii. 34.

⁸ 2 Sam. xvii. 8, Prov. xvii. 12, and here.

⁹ 5 Jer.

¹⁰ See in Boeth. iii. 2 pp. 740, 1.

¹¹ Heb. x. 31.

¹² Plin. viii. 64.

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† Heb. *the beast of the field.*
* Prov. 6. 32.
ch. 14. 1.
Mal. 1. 9.
* ver. 4.
† Heb. *in thy help.*

there will I devour them
like a lion: † the wild beast
shall tear them.

9 ¶ O Israel, * thou hast
destroyed thyself; † but in
me † is thine help.

Himself their Punisher, although laying aside, as it were, all His tenderness; now, lest the thought, that still it was He, the God of love Who punished, should give them hope, He says, *the wild beast shall devour them.* He gives them up, as it were, out of His own hands to the destroyer.

9. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help.* This is one of the concise sayings of Hosea, which is capable of many shades of meaning. The five words, one by one, are lit. *Israel, thy destruction, for or that, in or against Me, in or against thy help.* Something must be supplied any way; the simplest seems; *O Israel, thy destruction is, that thou hast been, hast rebelled against Me, against thy help*¹. Yet, in whatever way the words are filled up, the general sense is the same, that God alone is our help, we are the sources of our own destruction; and that, in separating ourselves from God, or rebelling against Him Who is our help until we depart from Him, Who Alone could be, and Who if we return, will be, our help. The sum of the meaning is, all our destruction is from ourselves; all our salvation is from God. “Perdition, reprobation, obduration, damnation, are not, properly and in themselves, from God, dooming to perdition, reprobating, obdurate, damning, but from man sinning, and obdurate or hardening himself in sin to the end of life. Contrariwise, predestination, calling, grace, are not from the foreseen merits of the predestinate, but from God, predestinating, calling, and, by His grace, forecoming the predestinate. Wherefore although the cause or ground, why they are predestinated, does not lie in the predestinate, yet in the not-predestinated does lie the ground or cause why they are not predestinated!”

“This saying then, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help*, may be thus unfolded;

Thy captivity, Israel, is from thee; thy redemption from Me.

Thy perishing is from thee; thy salvation from Me.

Thy death from thee; thy life from Me.

Thy evil from thee; thy good from Me.

¹ Rashi. * Lap. from Theologians on 1 p. q. 23.

² Aug. c. 2 Epp. Pet. ii. 21. lb.

³ Aq. 1. 2. q. 112. a. 3. ad. 2 lb.

⁴ S. Bern. Sermon 8 in Nat. Dom. lb.

* Lap.

10 || I will be thy king:

* where is any other that

may save thee in all thy

cities? and thy judges of

whom * thou saidst, Give

me a king and princes?

* 1 Sam. 8. 5, 19.

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† Rather, *Where is thy king?*
King Hoshea being then in prison.
2 Kgs. 17. 4.
* Deut. 32. 38.
ch. 10. 3.
ver. 4.

Thy reprobation from thee; thy predestination from Me, Who ever stand at the door of thy heart and in mercy knock.

Thy dereliction from thee; thy calling from Me.

Thy misery from thee; thy bliss from Me.

Thy damnation from thee, thy salvation and beatifying from Me.”

For “many good things doeth God in man, which man doeth not, but none doeth man, which God endueth not man to do.”

“The first cause of the defect of grace is from us; but the first cause of the gift of grace is from God.” “Rightly is God called, not the Father of judgments or of vengeance, but the Father of mercies, because from Himself is the cause and origin of His mercy, from us the cause of His judging or avenging.”

“Blessed the soul which comprehendeth this, not with the understanding only, but with the heart. Nothing can destroy us before God, but sin, the only real evil; and sin is wholly from us, God can have no part in it. But every aid to withdraw us from sin, or to hinder us from falling into it, comes from God alone, the sole Source of our salvation. The soul then must ever bless God, in its ills and its good; in its ills, by confessing that itself is the only cause of its suffering; in its good, owning that, when altogether unworthy of it, God prevented it by His grace, and preserves it each instant by His Almighty goodness.”

“No power, then, of the enemy could harm thee, unless, by thy sins, thou calledst forth the anger of God against thee to thy destruction. Ascribe it to thyself, not to the enemy. So let each sinful city or sinful soul say, which by its guilt draws on it the vengeance of God.”

This truth, that in Him alone is help, He confirms by what follows:

10. *I will be [lit. I would be] thy King; Where is any other that &c. Better, 'Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities; and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, give me a king and princes.*

As Israel was under Samuel, such it remained. Then it mistrusted God, and looked

¹ נִסְכָּן, which our Version renders *where?* never occurs alone as an interrogative, but always as subjoined to מִי, with which נִסְכָּן is identical and identified by great Jewish authorities, as Abulvalid.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

11 'I gave thee a king
in mine anger, and took
him away in my wrath.

*1 Sam. 8. 7.

& 10. 19. & 15.
22, 23. & 16. 1. ch. 10. 3.

to man for help, saying¹, *Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.* In choosing man they rejected God. The like they did, when they chose Jeroboam. In order to rid themselves of the temporary pressure of Rehoboam's taxes, they demanded anew king and princes. First they rejected God as their king; then they rejected the king whom God appointed, and Him in His appointment. *In all thy cities.* It was then to be one universal need of help. They had chosen a king to fight their battles, and had rejected God. Now was the test, whether their choice had been good or evil. One cry for help went up from all their cities. God would have heard it; could man?

"²This question is like that other³, *Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drink the wine of their drink offerings?* As there, when no answer could be made, He adds, *See now that I, I am He, and that there is no god with Me*, so here He subjoins;"

11. *I gave thee a king in Mine anger.* "God, when He is asked for ought amiss, sheweth displeasure, when He giveth, hath mercy, when He giveth not." "The devil was heard," [in asking to enter into the swine] "the Apostle was not heard," [when he prayed that the messenger of Satan might depart from him.] "⁴God heard him whom He purposed to condemn; and He heard not him whom He willed to heal." "⁵God, when propitious, denieth what we love, when we love amiss; when wroth, He giveth to the lover, what he loveth amiss. The Apostle saith plainly, *God gave them over to their own hearts' desire.* He gave them then what they loved, but, in giving, condemned them." God did appoint Jeroboam, although not in the way in which Israel took him. Jeroboam and Israel took, as from themselves, what God appointed; and, so taking it, marred God's gift. Taking it to themselves from themselves, they maintained it for themselves by human policy and sin. As was the beginning, such was the whole course of their kings. The beginning was rebellion; murder, intestine commotion, anarchy, was the oft-repeated issue. God was against them and their kings; but he let them have their way.

¹ 1 Sam. viii. 19.

² Rup.

³ Deut. xxxii. 37-9.

⁴ Sent. 252. ap. S. Aug. Apo. T. x. p. 239 Lap.

⁵ Id. in Ps. lxxxv. § 9.

⁶ Id. in Ps. xxvi. § 7.

12 "The iniquity of
Ephraim is bound up; his
sin is hid.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

*Deut. 32. 34.
Job 14. 17.

In His displeasure with them He allowed them their choice; in displeasure with their evil kings He took them away. Some He smote in their own persons, some in their posterity. So often as He gave them, so often He removed them¹, until, in Hosea, He took them away for ever. This too explains, how what God gave in anger, could be taken away also in anger. The civil authority was not a thing wrong in itself, the ceasing whereof must be a mercy. Israel was in a worse condition through its separate monarchy; but, apart from the calf-worship, it was not sin. The changing of one king for another did not mend it. Individual kings were taken away in anger against themselves; their removal brought fresh misery and bloodshed. Nations and Churches and individuals may put themselves in an evil position, and God may have allowed it in His anger, and yet, it may be their wisdom and humility to remain in it, until God change it, lest He should take it away, not in forgiveness, but in anger.

"David they neither asked for, nor did the Lord give him in His anger; but the Lord first chose him in mercy, gave him in grace, in His supreme good-pleasure He strengthened and preserved him." "²Let no one who suffereth from a wicked ruler, accuse him from whom he suffereth; for it was from his own ill deserts, that he became subject to such a ruler. Let him accuse then his own deeds, rather than the injustice of the ruler; for it is written, *I gave thee a king in Mine anger.* Why then disdain to have as rulers, those whose rule we receive from the anger of God?" "³When a reprobate people is allowed to have a reprobate pastor, that pastor is given, neither for his own sake, nor for that of the people; inasmuch as he so governeth, and they so obey, that neither the teacher nor the taught are found meet to attain to eternal bliss. Of whom the Lord saith by Hosea, *I gave thee a king in Mine anger.* For in the anger of God is a king given, when the bad have a worse appointed as their ruler. Such a pastor is then given, when he undertakes the rule of such a people, both being condemned alike to everlasting punishment."

12. *The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up* (as in a bag or purse, and so, *treasured up*), as Job saith, using the same word, "*My trans-*

¹ The words אָחַז, אָחַז, express this oft-renewed dealing of God.

² Rup.

³ S. Greg. in Job L. xxv. c. 20. Rib.

⁴ Id. in 1 Reg. ix. T. iii. pp. 215, 16. Ib.

⁵ Job xiv. 17. כְּצִרּוֹר as here צִרּוֹר.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

* Is. 13. 8.
Jer. 30. 6.
Prov. 22. 3.

13 *The sorrows of a
travailing woman shall
come upon him: he is an un-

gression is sealed up in a bag, and Thou sewest up mine iniquity. His sin is hid, i. e. as people lay up hidden treasure, to be brought out in its season. What Job feared for himself, was to be the portion of Ephraim. All his sins should be counted, laid by, heaped up. No one of them should escape His Eye Who sees all things as they pass, and with Whom, when past, they are present still. One by one, sins enter into the treasure-house of wrath; silently they are stored up, until the measure is full; to be brought out and unfolded in the Great Day. Ephraim thought, as do all sinners, that because God does not punish at once, He never will. They think, either that God will bear with them always, because He bears with them so long; or that He does not see, does not regard it, is not so precise about His laws being broken. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* But God had forewarned them¹; *Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures? To Me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: and² These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest wickedly that I was altogether such an one as thyself; I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.* Unrepented sin is an ever-growing store of the wrath of God, hid out of sight in the depths of the Divine judgments, but of which nothing will be lost, nothing missing. Man treasures it up, lays it up in store for himself, as the Apostle saith³; *Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his deeds?* *"Sin is hidden, when it is laid open by no voice of confession; yea, when it is covered with a shield of proud self-defence. Then iniquity is bound up, so that it cannot be loosed or forgiven. Contrariwise a holy man saith⁴, I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* But these hide their sin in the sight of men, and since they cannot hide it in the sight of God, they defend it with impenitent hearts, but the pangs of a travelling woman, he saith, shall come upon him. For as

¹ Eccl. viii. 11.
² Ps. l. 21.

³ Deut. xxxii. 34, 5.
⁴ Rom. ii. 4-6.

wise son; for he should not^{*}
stay† long in the place of the
breaking forth of children.

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* 2 Kgs 19. 3.
† Heb. a time.

a woman can conceal her conception for a time, but, at last, the travail-pangs betraying her, she discloses what was concealed, so these can dissemble and conceal for a time their sin, but in their time all the hidden things of their hearts shall, with anguish, be revealed, according to that⁵, *There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known.*"

13. *The sorrows of a travelling woman are come upon him.* The travail-pangs are violent, sudden, irresistible. A moment before they come, all is seemingly perfect health; they come, increase in vehemence, and, if they accomplish not that for which they are sent, end in death, both to the mother and the child. Such are God's chastisements. If they end not in the repentance of the sinner, they continue on in his destruction. But never is man more secure, than just before the last and final throe comes upon him. "The false security of Israel, when Samaria was on the point of falling into the hands of its enemies, was a picture of that of the Synagogue, when greater evils were coming upon it. Never did the Jews less think that the axe was laid to the root of the trees." This blind presumption is ever found in a people whom God casts off. At the end of the world, amid the awful signs, the fore-runners of the Day of Judgment, people will be able to reassure themselves, and say⁶, *Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.*

The prophet first compares Israel to the mother, in regard to the sufferings which are a picture of the sudden overwhelming visitations of God; then to the child, on whose staying or not staying in the womb, the welfare of both depends.

He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long. Senseless would be the child, which, if it had the power, lingered, hesitated, whether to come forth or no. While it lingers, at one time all but coming forth, then returning, the mother's strength is wasted, and both perish. Wonderful picture of the vacillating sinner, acted upon by the grace of God, but resisting it; at one time all but ready to pour out before his God the hidden burthen which oppresses him, at the next, withholding it; impelled by his sufferings, yet presenting a passive resistance; almost constrained at times by some mightier pang, yet still withheld; until, at the last, the impulses become

⁵ Rup.
⁶ S. Matt. x. 28.

⁷ Ps. xxxii. 5.
⁸ 1 Thesa. v. 3.

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* Is. 27. 8.
Ezek. 37. 12.
† Heb. the hand.
‡ 1 Cor. 15.
54, 55.

14 "I will ransom them
from † the power of the
grave; I will redeem them
from death: ‡ O death, I

will be thy plagues; O
grave, I will be thy de-
struction: * repentance
shall be hid from mine eyes.

Before
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* Jer. 15. 6.
Rom. 11. 29.

weaker, the pangs less felt, and he perishes with his unrepented sin.

"He had said, that the unwise cannot bring forth, that the wise can. He had mentioned *children*, i. e. such as are not still-born; who come forth perfect into the world. These, God saith, shall by His help be redeemed from everlasting destruction, and, at the same time, having predicted the destruction of that nation, He gives the deepest comfort to those who will to retain firm faith in Him, not allowing them to be utterly cast down."

14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave*; lit. *from the hand*, i. e. the grasp of the grave, or of hell. God, by His prophets, mingles promises of mercy in the midst of His threats of punishment. His mercy overflows the bounds of the occasion upon which He makes it known. He had sentenced Ephraim to temporal destruction. This was unchangeable. He points to that which turns all temporal loss into gain, their eternal redemption. The words are the fullest which could have been chosen. The word rendered *ransom*, signifies, rescued them by the payment of a price, the word rendered *redeem*, relates to one, who, as the nearest of kin, had the right to acquire anything as his own, by paying that price. Both words, in their exactest sense, describe what Jesus did, buying us *with a price*, a full and dear price, *not of corruptible things, as of silver and gold, but with His precious blood*¹; and that, becoming our near kinsman, by His Incarnation, *for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren*², and *little children*³. This was never done by God at any other time, than when, out of love for our lost world, *He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*; and He came to give His life a ransom for many⁴. Then only was man really delivered from the grasp of the grave; so that the first death should only be a freedom from corruption, an earnest, and, to fallen man, a necessary condition of immortality; and the second death should have no power over them⁵. Thenceforward "death, the parent of sorrow, ministers to joy; death, our dishonor, is employed to our glory; the gate of hell is the portal to

the kingdom of heaven; the *pit of destruction* is the entrance to salvation; and that to man, a sinner." At no other time, "were men freed from death and the grave, so as to make any distinction between them and others subject to mortality." The words refuse to be tied down to a temporal deliverance. A little longer continuance in Canaan is not a redemption from the power of the grave; nor was Ephraim so delivered. Words of God "cannot mean so little, while they express so much." Then and then alone were they, in their literal meaning, fulfilled when God the Son took our flesh⁶, that, through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The Jews have a tradition wrapped up in their way, that this was to be accomplished in Christ. "I went with the angel Kippod, and Messiah son of David went with me, until I came to the gates of hell. When the prisoners of hell saw the light of the Messiah, they wished to receive him, saying, this is he who will bring us out of this darkness, as it is written, *I will redeem them from the hand of hell*."

"Not without reason is the vouchsafed mercy thus once and again outspoken to us, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death*. It is said in regard to that twofold death whereby we all died in Adam, of the body and of the soul." *O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction*. So full is God's word, that the sense remains the same, amid much difference of rendering. Christ was the death of death, when He became subject to it; the destruction of the grave when He lay in the tomb. Yet to render it in the form of a question is most agreeable to the language⁷. *O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?* It is a burst of triumph at the promised redemption, then fulfilled to us in earnest and in hope, when Christ, being risen from the dead, became the First-fruits of them that slept⁸, and we rose in Him. But the Apostle teaches us, that then it shall be altogether fulfilled, when, at the last Day, *this corruptible*

¹ Osor.

² 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

³ Heb. ii. 11.

⁴ S. John xiii. 33.

⁵ S. John iii. 16.

⁶ S. Matt. xx. 28, add 1 Tim. ii. 6.

⁷ Rev. xx. 6.

⁸ S. Bern. Serm. 26 in Cant. Lap.

⁹ Pœc.

¹⁰ Davison on Prophecy.

¹¹ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

¹² Bereshith Rabba, in Martin. Pug. Fid. f. 605, G.

¹³ Rnp.

¹⁴ "It is most naturally taken in the sense in which Hosca had just used it, as equivalent to 'I will'. As a verb, it would mean, *I would be*, which would not agree with the absolute declaration just before, *I will ransom, I will redeem*."

¹⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

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15 ¶ Though ^ahe be
fruitful among his brethren,
^aan east wind shall
come, the wind of the
LORD shall come up from
the wilderness, and his

^a See Gen. 41.
52. & 48. 19.
Jer. 4. 11.
Ezek. 17. 10.
& 19. 12.
ch. 4. 19.

shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality¹. Then shall death and hell deliver up the dead which shall be in them, and themselves be cast into the lake of fire². "Then shall there be no sting of death; sorrow and sighing shall flee away; fear and anxiety shall depart; tears shall be no more, and in place thereof shall be boundless pleasure, everlasting joy, praise of the glory of God in most sweet harmony." But now too, through death, the good man "ceases to die, and begins to live;" he "³dies wholly to the world, that he may live perfectly with God; the soul returns to the Author of its being, and is hidden in the hidden Presence of God."

Death and hell had no power to resist, and God says that He will not alter His sentence; *Repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes; as the Apostle says⁴, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

15. *Though [lit. when] he [shall] be fruitful among his brethren.* Fruitfulness was God's promise to Ephraim, and was expressed in his name. It was fulfilled, abused, and, in the height of its fulfillment, was taken away. Ephraim is pictured as a fair and fruitful tree. An *East wind*, so desolating in the East, and that, no chance wind, but *the wind of the Lord*, a wind, sent by God and endued by God with the power to destroy, *shall come up from the wilderness*, parching, scorching, fiery, from the burning sands of "Arabia the desert," from which it came, and *shall dry up the fountain* of his being. Deep were the roots of this fair and flourishing tree, great its vigor, ample and perpetual the fountain of its waters, over which it grew and by which it was sustained. He calls it "*his spring, his fountain*," as though this source of its life were made over to it, and made its own. It was *planted by the water side*; but it was not of God's planting. *The East wind from the Lord* should dry up the deepest well-spring of its waters, and the tree should wither. Such are ungodly greatness and prosperity. While they are fairest in show, their life-fountains are drying up.

He shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. He, emphatically⁵, the enemy whom the Prophet had ever in his mind, as the

spring shall become dry
and his fountain shall be
dried up: he shall spoil
the treasure of all [†]pleasant
vessels.

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CHRIST
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[†] Heb. *vessels of desire.*
Nah. 2. 9.
Fulfilled,
cir. 721.
2 Kgs 17. 6.

16 || Samaria shall be-

instrument of God's chastisement on His people, and who was represented by the East wind; the Assyrian, who came from the East, to whom, as to the East wind, the whole country between lay open, for the whirlwinds of his armies to sweep over in one straight course from the seat of his dominion.

16. *Samaria shall become desolate, or shall bear her iniquity.* Her iniquity should now find her out, and rest upon her. Of this, "desolation" was, in God's judgments, the consequence. Samaria, "the nursery of idolatry and rebellion against God," the chief in pride should be chief in punishment. *For she hath rebelled against her God.* It aggravated her sin, that He *against Whom she rebelled*, was her own God. He Who had chosen her to be His, and made Himself her God: Who had shewed Himself *her God* in the abundance of His loving-kindness, from the deliverance out of Egypt to that day. This her desolation, it is again said, should be complete. Hope remains, if the men of a generation are cut off; yet not only should these fall by the sword; those already born were to be dashed in pieces; those as yet unborn were to be sought out for destruction, even in their mother's womb. Such atrocities were common then. Elisha foretold to Hazael that he would perpetrate both cruelties⁶, Shalmaneser dashed the young children in pieces⁷, as did the conqueror of No-Ammon⁸, and the Babylonians⁹ afterward. The children of Ammon ripped up the women with child in Gilead¹⁰, and the usurper Menahem in Tiphshah and its coasts¹¹. Isaiah prophesies that Babylon should undergo, in its turn, the same as to its children¹², and the Psalmist pronounces God's blessing on its destroyer who should so requite him¹³.

Such was to be the end of the pride, the ambition, the able policy, the wars, the oppressions, the luxury, the self-enjoyment, and, in all, the rebellion of Samaria against *her God*. She has stood the more in opposition to God, the nearer she might have been to Him, and *bare her iniquity*. As a city of God's people, it was never restored. The spot, in its heathen colonists, with which Assyrian policy re-peopled it¹⁴, was still the abode of a mingled religion. Corruption clung, by inheritance,

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 54.

² de dign. Div. Am. fin. ap. S. Bern. ii. 274.

⁴ Rom. xi. 29.

⁵ נִיִּי

² Rev. xx. 13, 14.

² Bern. ii. 274.

² Kings viii. 12.

⁷ Above x. 14.

¹⁰ Am. i. 13.

¹² xiii. 16.

⁹ Ps. cxxxvii. 9.

¹¹ 2 Kings xv. 16.

¹² 2 Kings xvii. 24.

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* 2 Kgs 18. 12.
* 2 Kgs 8. 12, &
15. 16.
Is. 19. 16.
eh. 10. 14, 15.
Amos 1. 13.
Nah. 3. 10.

come desolate; 'for she hath rebelled against her God: 'they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

to its site. This too was destroyed by John Hyrcanus. "He effaced the marks that it had ever been a city¹." It was rebuilt by the Romans, after Pompey had taken Jerusalem². Herod reinclosed a circuit of two miles and a half of the ancient site; fortified it strongly, as a check on the Jews; repeopled it, partly with some who had served in his wars, partly with the people around; gave them lands, revived their idolatry by replacing their poor temple by one remarkable for size and beauty, in an area of a furlong and a half; and called the place Sebaste in honor of his heathen patron, Augustus³. A coin of Nero, struck there, bears the figure (it is thought) of its old idol, Ashtaroeth⁴. S. Jerome says, that S. John the Baptist was buried there⁵. The heathen, who were encouraged in such desecrations by Julian the Apostate⁶, opened the tomb, burned the bones, and scattered the dust⁷. The city became a Christian see, and its Bishops were present at the four first General Councils⁸. It is now but a poor village, connected with the strongly-fortified town of Herod by its heathen name Sebastieh, a long avenue of broken pillars, and the tomb of the great Forerunner⁹. Of the ancient capital of Ephraim, not even a ruin speaks.

The Prophet closes this portion of his prophecy, as other prophets so often do, with the opposite end of the righteous and the wicked. He had spoken of the victory over death, the irrevocable purpose of God for good to his own; then he speaks of utter final destruction. Then when the mercy of God shall be shewn to the uttermost, and the victory over sin and death shall be accomplished, then shall all the pomp of the world, its riches, joys, luxuries, elegance, glory, dignity, perish, and not a wreck be left behind of all which once dazzled the eyes of men, for which they forsook their God, and sold themselves to evil and the evil one.

XIV. 1. *O Israel, return [now, quite] unto the Lord your God.* The heavy and scarcely interrupted tide of denunciation is now past. Billow upon billow have rolled over Ephraim; and the last wave discharged itself in the

CHAPTER XIV.

Before
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1. *An exhortation to repentance.*

4. *A promise of God's blessing.*

O ISRAEL, 'return unto the LORD thy God; 'for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

* eh. 12. 6.
Joel 2. 13.
* ch. 13. 9.

overwhelming, indiscriminating destruction of the seat of its strength. As a nation, it was to cease to be. Its separate existence was a curse, not a blessing; the offspring of rivalry, matured by apostasy; the parent, in its turn, of jealousy, hatred, and mutual vexation.

But while the kingdom was past and gone, the children still remained heirs of the promises made to their fathers. As then, before, Hosea declared that Israel, after having long remained solitary, should in the end seek the Lord and David their king¹⁰, so now, after these manifold denunciations of their temporal destruction, God not only invites them to repentance, but foretells that they should be wholly converted.

Every word is full of mercy. God calls them by the name of acceptance, which He had given to their forefather, Jacob; *O Israel*. He deigns to beseech them to return; *return now*; and that not "towards" but *quite up to* "Himself, the Unchangeable God, whose mercies and promises were as immutable as His Being. To Himself, the Unchangeable, God invites them to return; and that, as being still their God. They had cast off their God; God had not cast off His people whom He foreknew¹¹.

"¹² He entreats them not only to turn back and look toward the Lord with a partial and imperfect repentance, but not to leave off till they were come quite home to Him by a total and sincere repentance and amendment." He bids them *return quite to Himself*, the Unchangeable God, and their God. "Great is repentance," is a Jewish saying¹³, "which maketh men to reach quite up to the Throne of glory."

For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. "This is the first ray of Divine light on the sinner. God begins by discovering to him the abyss into which he has fallen," and the way by which he fell. Their own iniquity it was, on which they had stumbled and so had fallen, powerless to rise, except through His call, whose voice is with power¹⁴, and "Who giveth what He commandeth." "¹⁵ Ascribe

¹ Jos. Ant. 13. 10. 3.

² Ib. 14. 4. 4. and 5. 3.

³ Ib. 15. 8. 5.

⁴ Vallant, Num. Imp. p. 370 in Reland, Pal. p. 981.

⁵ On Hos. i. 5. Obad. init. Mic. i. 6. Onom. v. Semeron.

⁶ Misopog. p. 95.

⁷ Theod. H. E. iii. 7.

⁸ See in Reland, p. 983.

⁹ Stanley, Palestine, p. 245.

¹⁰ iii. 5.

¹¹ Not $\lambda\alpha$ but $\gamma\epsilon$.

¹² Rom. xi. 2.

¹³ Poc.

¹⁴ Yoma, c. 8. in Poc.

¹⁵ Ps. xlix. 4.

¹⁶ Osor.

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cir. 725.

2 Take with you words,
and turn to the LORD: say
unto him, Take away all

iniquity, and || receive us
graciously: so will we ren-
der the ° calves of our lips.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.
Or, give good.
Heb. 13. 15.

not thy calamity," He would say, "to thine own weakness, to civil dissension, to the disuse of military discipline, to want of wisdom in thy rulers, to the ambition and cruelty of the enemy, to reverse of fortune. These things had not gone against thee, hadst not thou gone to war with the law of thy God. Thou inflictest the deadly wound on thyself; thou destroyedst thyself. Not as fools vaunt, by fate, or fortune of war, but by thine iniquity hast thou fallen. Thy remedy then is in thine own hand. Return to thy God."

"In these words, by thine iniquity, he briefly conveys, that each is to ascribe to himself the iniquity of all sin, of whatsoever he has been guilty, not defending himself, as Adam did, in whom we all, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned and fallen, as the Apostle says¹, *For we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*. By adding actual, to that original, sin, Israel and every other nation falleth. He would say then, O Israel, be thou first converted, for thou hast need of conversion; for thou hast fallen; and confess this very thing, that thou hast fallen by thine iniquity; for such confession is the beginning of conversion."

But wherewith should he return?

2. *Take with you words.* He bids them not bring costly offerings, that they might regain His favor; not whole burnt offerings of bullocks, goats or rams; with which, and with which alone, they had before gone to seek Him²; not the silver and gold which they had lavished on their idols; but what seems the cheapest of all, which any may have, without cost to their substance; words; worthless, as mere words; precious when from the heart; words of confession and prayer, blending humility, repentance, confession, entreaty and praise of God. (God seems to assign to them a form, with which they should approach Him. But with these words, they were also to turn inwardly and turn unto the Lord, with your whole heart, and not your lips alone. "After ye shall be converted, confess before Him."

Take away all iniquity [lit. and pleadingly, *Thou wilt take away all iniquity.*] They had fallen by their iniquities; before they can rise again, the stumbling-blocks must be taken out of their way. They then, unable themselves to do it, must turn to God, with Whom alone

is power and mercy to do it, and say to Him, *Take away all iniquity*, acknowledging that they had manifold iniquities, and praying Him to forgive all, *take away all. All iniquity!* "not only then the past, but what we fear for the future. Cleanse us from the past, keep us from the future. Give us righteousness, and preserve it to the end."

And receive us graciously, [lit. and receive good³]. When God has forgiven and taken away iniquity, He has removed all hindrance to the influx of His grace. There is no vacuum in His spiritual, any more than in His natural, creation. When God's good Spirit is chased away, the evil spirits enter the house, which is empty, swept, and garnished⁴ for them. When God has forgiven and taken away man's evil, He pours into him grace and all good. When then Israel and, in him, the penitent soul, is taught to say, *receive good*, it can mean only, the good which Thou Thyself hast given; as David says, *of Thine own we have given Thee*⁵. As God is said to "crown in us His own gifts;" ("His own gifts," but "in us";) so these pray to God to receive from them His own good, which they had from Him. For even the good, which God giveth to be in us, He accepteth in condescension and forgiving mercy, *Who crowneth thee in mercy and loving-kindness*⁶. "They pray God to accept their service, forgiving their imperfection, and mercifully considering their frailty. For since our righteousnesses are filthy rags, we ought ever humbly to entreat God, not to despise our dutifulness, for the imperfections, wanderings, and negligences mingled therewith. For exceedingly imperfect is it, especially if we consider the majesty of the Divine Nature, which should be served, were it possible, with infinite reverence." They plead to God, then, to accept what, although from Him they have it, yet through their imperfection, were, but for His goodness, unworthy of His acceptance. Still, since the glory of God is the end of all creation, by asking Him to accept it, they plead to Him, that this is the end for which He made and remade them, and placed the good in them, that it might redound to His glory. As, on the other hand, the Psalmist says⁷, *What profit is there in my blood, if I go down into the pit*, as though

means, *receive good*, as just before, קחו דברים קח means, *take words*, but for the seeming difficulty, "what good had they?"

¹ 8. Matt. xii. 44.

² 1 Chr. xxix. 14.

³ Ps. ciii. 4.

⁴ S. Aug.

⁵ xxx. 9.

¹ Rnp. ² Eph. ii. 3. ³ See ab. v. 6. ⁴ The rendering, *And receive us graciously*, overlooks the contrast of the two clauses. Israel is bidden to pray God, to take away, and to receive. On the two verbs, there follow two nouns, which stand naturally as the object of each; קח וקח טוב.

טשט. No one would have doubted that קח טוב

Before
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3 ^a Asshur shall not save
us; ^e we will not ride upon
horses; ^f neither will we
say any more to the
Ps. 33. 17. Is. 30. 2, 16. & 31. 1. ^f ch. 2. 17. ver. 8.

work of our hands, Ye
are our gods: ^e for in
thee the fatherless findeth
mercy.
Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.
^e Ps. 10. 14. &
Gs. 5.

his own perishing were a loss to God, his Creator, since thus there were one creature the less to praise Him. "Take from us all iniquity, leave in us no weakness, none of our former decay, lest the evil root should send forth a new growth of evil; and receive good; for unless Thou take away our evil, we can have no good to offer Thee, according to that ^g, *depart from evil, and do good.*"

So will we render the calves of our lips, lit. and we would fain repay, calves, our lips; i. e. when God shall have forgiven us all our iniquity, and received at our hands what, through His gift, we have to offer, the good which through His good Spirit we can do, then would we offer a perpetual thank-offering, our lips. This should be the substitute for the thank-offerings of the law. As the Psalmist says ^h, *I will praise the Name of God with a song, and magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord, better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.* They are to bind themselves to perpetual thanksgiving. As the morning and evening sacrifice were continual, so was their new offering to be continual. But more. The material sacrifice, the bullock, was offered, consumed, and passed away. Their lips were offered, and remained; a perpetual thank-offering, even a living sacrifice, living on like the mercies for which they thanked; giving forth their "endless song" for never-ending mercies.

This too looks on to the Gospel, in which, here on earth, our unending thanksgiving is beginning, in which also it was the purpose of God to restore those of Ephraim who would return to Him. ⁱ Here we see law extinguished, the Gospel established. For we see other rites, other gifts. So then the priesthood is also changed. For three sorts of sacrifices were of old ordained by the law, with great state. Some signified the expiation of sin; some expressed the ardor of piety; some, thanksgiving. To those ancient signs and images, the truth of the Gospel, without figure, corresponds. Prayer to God, to take away all iniquity, contains a confession of sin, and expresses our faith, that we place our whole hope of recovering our lost purity and of obtaining salvation in the mercy of Christ. Receive good. What other good can we offer, than detestation of our past sin, with burning desire of holiness? This is the burnt offering. Lastly, we will repay the

calves of our lips, is the promise of that solemn vow, most acceptable to God, whereby we bind ourselves to keep in continual remembrance all the benefits of God, and to render ceaseless praise to the Lord Who has bestowed on us such priceless gifts. For the calves of the lips are orisons well-pleasing unto God. Of which David says ^j, *Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.*"

3. Asshur shall not save us. After prayer for pardon and for acceptance of themselves, and thanksgiving for acceptance, comes the promise not to fall back into their former sins. Trust in man, in their own strength, in their idols, had been their besetting sins. Now, one by one, they disavow them.

First, they disclaim trust in man, and making ^k flesh their arm. Their disclaimer of the help of the Assyrian, to whom they had so often betaken themselves against the will of God, contains, at once, that best earnest of true repentance, the renewal of the confession of past sins, and the promise to rely no more on any princes of this world, of whom he was then chief. The horse, in like way, is the symbol of any warlike strength of their own. As the Psalmist says ^l, *Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God; and ^m, a horse is a vain thing for safety, neither shall he deliver any by his great strength; and Solomon ⁿ, The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but salvation is of the Lord.* War was almost the only end for which the horse was used among the Jews. If otherwise, it was a matter of great and royal pomp. It was part of a standing army. Their kings were especially forbidden to multiply horses ^o to themselves. Solomon, indeed, in his prosperity, broke this, as well as other commands of God. The pious king Hezekiah, although possessed at one time of large treasure, so kept that command as to furnish matter of mockery to Rabshakeh, the blaspheming envoy of Assyria, that he had neither horses nor horsemen ^p. The horses being procured from Egypt ^q, the commerce gave fresh occasion for idolatry.

Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods. This is the third disavowal. Since it was folly and sin to trust

¹ Jer. ² Ps. xxxvii. 27. ³ Isai. 30. 1. ⁴ Osor.
⁵ Ps. li. ult. ⁶ Jer. xvii. 5. ⁷ Ps. xx. 7.

⁸ Ps. xxxiii. 17. ⁹ Prov. xxi. 31. ¹⁰ Deut. xvii. 16.
¹¹ 2 Kings xviii. 23. ¹² 1 Kings x. 28.

Before
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cir. 725.

4 ¶ I will heal ^b their
backsliding, I will love
them ^c freely: for mine

^a Jer. 5. 6. &
14. 7.
ch. 11. 7. ^d Eph. 1. 6.

in the creatures which God had made, apart from God, how much more, to trust in things which they themselves had made, instead of God, and offensive to God!

For in Thee [or, O Thou, in Whom] the fatherless findeth mercy. He is indeed fatherless who hath not God for his Father. They confess then, that they were and deserved to be thus fatherless and helpless, a prey to every oppressor; but they appeal to God by the title which He had taken, the Father of the fatherless^a, that He would have mercy on them, who had no help but in Him. ^c We promise this, they say, hoping in the help of Thy mercy, since it belongeth to Thee and is for Thy Glory to have mercy on the people which believeth in Thee, and to stretch forth Thine Hand, that they may be able to leave their wonted ills and amend their former ways."

4. I will heal their backsliding. God, in answer, promises to heal that wound of their souls, whence every other evil came, their fickleness and unsteadfastness. Hitherto, this had been the characteristic of Israel.

^a Within a while they forgot His works, and would not abide His counsels. ^c They forgot what He had done. Their heart was not whole with Him; neither continued they steadfast in His covenant. They turned back and tempted God. They kept not His testimonies, but turned back and fell away like their forefathers, starting aside like a broken bow. Steadfastness to the end is the special gift of the Gospel. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it^b. And to individuals, Jesus, having loved His own, loved them unto the end^c. In healing that disease of unsteadfastness, God healed all besides. This He did to all, whosoever or howsoever dispersed, who received the Gospel; this He doth still; and this He will do completely in the end, when all Israel shall be saved.

I will love them freely; i.e. as the word means, impelled^d thereto by Himself alone, and so, (as used of God) moved by His own Essential Bountifulness, the exceeding greatness of His Goodness, largely, bountifully. God loves us freely in loving us against our deserts, because He is love; He loves us freely in that He freely became Man, and, having become Man freely shed His Blood for the remission of our sins, freely forgave our sins;

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 5.

² Rup.

³ Ps. lxxviii. 12, 37, 42, 57, 58.

⁴ S. Matt. xxviii. 20. xvi. 18.

⁵ Ps. cvi. 13.

anger is turned away from him.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

5 I will be as ^a the dew ^b Job 29. 19.
Prov. 19. 12.

He loves us freely, in giving us grace, according to the good pleasure of His will^a, to become pleasing to Him, and causing all good in us; He loves us freely, in rewarding infinitely the good which we have from Him. ^b More manifestly here speaketh the Person of the Saviour Himself, promising His own Coming to the salvation of penitents, with sweetly sounding promise, with sweetness full of grace."

For Mine anger is turned away from him. As He says¹⁰ In My wrath I smote thee; but in My favor have I had mercy on thee. He doth not withhold only, or suspend His anger, but He taketh it away wholly. So the Psalmist saith¹¹, Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people; Thou hast covered all their sin; Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath; Thou hast turned from the fierceness of Thine anger.

5. I will be as the dew unto Israel. Before, He had said¹², his spring shall become dry and his fountain shall be dried up. Now again He enlarges the blessing; their supply shall be unfailing, for it shall be from God; yea, God Himself shall be that blessing; I will be the dew; descending on the mown grass¹³, to quicken and refresh it; descending, Himself, into the dried and parched and sere hearts of men, as He saith, We will come unto him and make Our abode in him¹⁴. The grace of God, like the dew, is not given once for all, but is, day by day, waited for, and, day by day, renewed. Yet doth it not pass away, like the fitful goodness¹⁵ of God's former people, but turns into the growth and spiritual substance of those on whom it descends.

He shall grow as the lily. No one image can exhibit the manifold grace of God in those who are His own, or the fruits of that grace. So the Prophet adds one image to another, each supplying a distinct likeness of a distinct grace or excellence. The lily is the emblem of the beauty and purity of the soul in grace; the cedar of Lebanon, of its strength and deep-rootedness, its immovableness and uprightness; the evergreen olive tree which "remaineth in its beauty both winter and summer," of the unvarying presence of Divine Grace, continually, supplying an ever-sustained freshness, and issuing in fruit; and the fragrance of the aromatic plants with which the lower parts of Mount Lebanon are decked, of its loveliness and sweetness; as a native explains this¹⁶, "he takes a sec-

⁶ S. John xlii. 1.

⁷ נִרְכָּה.

⁸ Eph. 1. 5.

⁹ Rup.

¹⁰ Is. lx. 10.

¹¹ lxxxv. 2, 3.

¹² xlii. 15.

¹³ Ps. lxxii. 6.

¹⁴ S. John xiv. 23.

¹⁵ Above vi. 4.

¹⁶ R. Tanchum, in Poc.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

unto Israel: he shall || grow
as the lily, and † cast forth
his roots as Lebanon.

Or, blossom.
† Heb. strike.
† Heb. shall go.

6 His branches † shall
spread, and † his beauty
shall be as the olive tree,

1 Ps. 52. 8. &
128. 3.

and † his smell as Leba-
non.

Before
CHRIST
cir. 725.

7 † They that dwell un-
der his shadow shall re-
turn; they shall revive as
the corn, and || grow as the

≈ Gen. 27. 27.
Cant. 4. 11.
≈ Ps. 91. 1.

Or, blossom.

and comparison from Mount Lebanon for the abundance of aromatic things and odoriferous flowers." Such are the myrtles and lavender and the odoriferous reed; from which "as you enter the valley" [between Lebanon and Anti-lebanon] "straightway the scent meets you." All these natural things are established and well-known symbols of things spiritual. The lily, so called in Hebrew from its dazzling whiteness, is, in the Canticles, the emblem of souls in which Christ takes delight. The lily multiplies exceedingly¹; yet hath it a weak root and soon fadeth. The Prophet, then, uniteth with these, plants of unfading green, and deep root. The seed which *had no root*, our Lord says, *withered away*², as contrariwise, St. Paul speaks of those, who are *rooted and grounded in love*³, and of being *rooted and built up in Christ*⁴. The wide-spreading branches are an emblem of the gradual growth and enlargement of the Church, as our Lord says⁵, *It becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof*. The symmetry of the tree and its outstretched arms express, at once, grace and protection. Of the olive the Psalmist says⁶, *I am like a green olive tree in the house of God*; and Jeremiah says⁷, *The Lord called thy name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit*; and of "fragrance" the spouse says in the Canticles⁸, *because of the savor of Thy good ointments, Thy name is as ointment poured forth*; and the Apostle says⁹, *thanks be to God, which maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place*. Deeds of charity also are an odor of good smell¹⁰; the prayers of the saints also are sweet odors¹¹. All these are the fruits of the Spirit of God Who says, *I will be as the dew unto Israel*. Such reunion of qualities, being beyond nature, suggests the more, that that, wherein they are all combined, the future Israel, the Church, shall flourish with graces beyond nature, in their manifoldness, completeness, unfadingness.

7. *They that dwell under his shadow*, i. e. the shadow of the restored Israel, who had just been described under the image of a magnificent tree uniting in itself all perfections. "14 They that are under the shadow of the Church are together under the shadow of

Christ the Head thereof, and also of God the Father." The Jews, of old, explained it¹⁵, "they shall dwell under the shadow of their Messias." These, he says, *shall return*, i. e. they shall turn to be quite other than they had been, even back to Him, to Whom they belonged, Whose creatures they were, God. *They shall revive as the corn*. The words may be differently rendered, in the same general meaning. The simple words, *They shall revive* [lit. *give life to, or preserve in life,*] *corn*, have been filled up differently. Some of old, (whence ours has been taken) understood it, *they shall revive themselves*¹⁶ and so, *shall live*, and that either as *corn*, (as it is said, *shall grow as the vine*); or by *corn*¹⁷ which is also very natural, since "bread is the staff of life," and our spiritual Bread is the support of our spiritual life. Or lastly, (of which the grammar is easier, yet the idiom less natural) it has been rendered *they shall give life to corn*, make corn to live, by cultivating it. In all ways the sense is perfect. If we render, *shall revive as corn*, it means, being, as it were, dead, they shall not only live again with renewed life, but shall even increase. Corn first dies in its outward form, and so is multiplied; the fruit-bearing branches of the vine are pruned and cut, and so they bear richer fruit. So through suffering, chastisement, or the heavy hand of God or man, the Church, being purified, yields more abundant fruits of grace. Or if rendered, *shall make corn to grow*, since the Prophet, all around, is under figures of God's workings in nature, speaking of His workings of grace, then it is the same image, as when our Lord speaks of those who *receive the seed in an honest and true heart and bring forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty*¹⁸. Or if we were to render, *shall produce life through wheat*, what were this, but that seed-corn, which, for us and for our salvation, was sown in the earth, and died, and brought forth much fruit; the Bread of life, of which our Lord says¹⁹, *I am the Bread of life, Whoso eateth of this bread shall live for ever, and the bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*?

The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. The grapes of Lebanon have been of the size of plums; its wine has been spoken

¹ Theophr. Hist. Plant. x. 7.

² Cant. ii. 1. 2.

³ Plin. in Poc.

⁴ S. Matt. xiii. 6.

⁵ Eph. iii. 17.

⁶ Col. ii. 7.

⁷ S. Matt. xiii. 32.

⁸ Ps. lli. 8.

⁹ xl. 16.

¹⁰ i. 3.

¹¹ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

¹² Phil. iv. 18.

¹³ Rev. v. 8.

¹⁴ Poc.

¹⁵ Jon.

¹⁶ Kimchi.

¹⁷ As the old versions, LXX. Vulg. Syr.

¹⁸ S. Matt. xiii. 23.

¹⁹ S. John vi. 48, 51.

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vine: the ||scent thereof
shall be as the wine of Leba-

| Or, memorial. non.

8 Ephraim shall say,

* ver. 3.

* What have I to do any

of as the best in the East or even in the world¹. Formerly Israel was as a luxuriant, but empty, vine, bringing forth no fruit to God². God³ looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. Now its glory and luxuriance should not hinder its bearing fruit, and that, the noblest of its kind. Rich and fragrant is the odor of graces, the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and not fleeting, but abiding.

8. Ephraim shall say, *what have I to do any more with idols?* So Isaiah foretells⁴, *The idols He shall utterly abolish*. Aforetime Ephraim said obstinately, in the midst of God's chastisements⁵; *I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink*. Now she shall renounce them wholly and for ever. This is entire conversion, to part wholly with everything which would dispute the allegiance with God, to cease to look to any created thing or being, for what is the gift of the Creator alone. So the Apostle says⁶, *what concord hath Christ with Belial?* This verse exhibits in few, vivid, words, converted Ephraim speaking with God, and God answering; Ephraim renouncing his sins, and God accepting him; Ephraim glorying in God's goodness, and God reminding him that he holds all from Himself.

I have heard and observed him. God answers the profession and accepts it. I, (emphatic) *I myself have heard and have answered*, as He says⁷, *Before they call I will answer*. Whereas God, before, had hid His face from them, or had observed⁸ them, only as the object of His displeasure, and as ripe for destruction, now He reverses this, and observes them, in order to forecome the wishes of their hearts before they are expressed, to watch over them and survey and provide for all their needs. To this, Ephraim exulting in God's goodness, answers, *I am like a green fir tree*, i. e. ever-green, ever-fresh. The *berosh*, (as S. Jerome, living in Palestine, thought) one of the large genus of the *pine* or *fir*, or (as others trans-

more with idols? * I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. * From me is thy fruit found.

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* Jer. 31. 18.
* Jam. 1. 17.

lated) the *cypress*⁹, was a tall stately tree¹⁰; in whose branches the stork could make its nest¹¹; its wood precious enough to be employed in the temple¹²; fine enough to be used in all sorts of musical instruments¹³; strong and pliant enough to be used for spears¹⁴. It was part of the glory of Lebanon¹⁵. A Greek historian says that Lebanon¹⁶ was full of cedars and pines and cypresses, of wonderful beauty and size." A modern traveller says, of "the cypress groves of Lebanon;" "Each tree is in itself a study for the landscape painter—some, on account of their enormous stems and branches. —Would you see trees in all their splendor and beauty, then enter these wild groves, that have never been touched by the pruning knife of art." This tree, in its majestic beauty, tenacity of life, and undying verdure, winter and summer, through the perpetual supply of sap, pictures the continual life of the soul through the unbroken supply of the grace of God. Created beauty must, at best, be but a faint image of the beauty of the soul in grace; for this is from the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost.

From Me is thy fruit found. Neither the pine nor the cypress bear any fruit, useful for food. It is probable then that here too the Prophet fills out one image by another and says that restored Israel, the Church of God, or the soul in grace, should not only have beauty and majesty, but what is not, in the way of nature, found united therewith, fruitfulness also. *From Me is thy fruit found*; as our Lord says¹⁷, *I am the vine, ye are the branches*. Human nature, by itself, can as little bear fruit well-pleasing to God, as the pine or cypress can bear fruit for human use. As it were a miracle in nature, were these trees to bring forth such fruit, so, for man to bring forth fruits of grace, is a miracle of grace. The presence of works of grace attests the immediate working of God the Holy Ghost, as much as any miracle in nature.

leaves like the cypress, more prickly than the other." Pliny (xxv. 11) says that some called this "the Cretan cypress." The hntum is commonly called the "Juniperus Sabina," which, however, is not known to be a tall tree, although some of the Juniper tribe are.

¹⁰ Is. lv. 13.

¹¹ Ps. civ. 17.

¹² 1 Kings v. 22, 24. [S. 10. Eng.] vl. 15, 34.

¹³ 2 Sam. vl. 5.

¹⁴ Nah. ii. 3.

¹⁵ Is. xxxvii. 24. lx. 13.

¹⁶ Diod. Sic. xix. 58.

¹⁷ Van de Velde Syr. and Pal. ii. 475.

¹⁸ S. John xv. 5.

¹ See in Edmann, li. 193. Germ. and Maronites in Lap.

² x. 1.

³ Is. v. 2.

⁴ ii. 18.

⁵ ch. ii. 5.

⁶ 2 Cor. vi. 15.

⁷ Is. lxxv. 24.

⁸ xlii. 7.

⁹ S. Jerome uniformly renders abies. The LXX. and Syr. vary, rendering both cypress and pine. The Syriac *berutha* (doubtless the same tree and used sometimes for it in the Peshito) is said by Bar Bahlul to be the Arabic *Abukul*; and this Ibn Baithar describes as "a large tree with leaves like the tamarisk." He identifies it also with the *Spadiv* of Dioscorides, who mentions a second sort, "with

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9 'Who is wise, and he shall understand these
* Ps. 107. 43. Jer. 9. 12. Dan. 12. 10. John 8. 47. & 18. 37.

9. *Who is wise and he shall understand these things?* The Prophet says this, not of the words in which he had spoken, but of the substance. He does not mean that his style was obscure, or that he had delivered the message of God in a way difficult to be understood. This would have been to fail of his object. Nor does he mean that human acuteness is the key to the things of God. He means that those only of a certain character, those *wise*, through God, unto God, will understand the things of God. So the Psalmist, having related some of God's varied chastenings, mercies and judgments, sums up¹, *Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord*. So Asaph says that God's dealings with the good and bad in this life were too hard for him to understand, until he went into the sanctuary of God; then understood he their end². In like way Daniel, at the close of his prophecy, sums up the account of a sifting-time³, *Many shall be purified and made white and tried, and the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand*. As these say that the wise alone understand the actual dealings of God with man, so Hosea says, that the wise alone would understand what he had set forth of the mercy and severity of God, of His love for man, His desire to pardon, His unwillingness that any should perish, His longing for our repentance, His store of mercies in Christ, His gifts of grace and His free eternal love, and yet His rejection of all half-service and His final rejection of the impenitent. *Who is wise?* "The word *who* is always taken, not for what is impossible, but for what is difficult." So Isaiah saith⁴, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* Few are wise with the wisdom which is from above; few understand, because few wish to understand, or seek wisdom from Him *Who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not*⁵. The question implies also, that God longs that men should understand to their salvation. He inquires for them, calls to them that they would meditate on His mercies and judgments. As S. Paul says⁶, *Behold the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness. O the depth of the riches both of the*

things? prudent, and he shall know them? for * the
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* Prov. 10. 29. Luke 2. 34. 2 Cor. 2. 16. 1 Pet. 2. 7, 8.

wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. Unsearchable to intellect and theory; intelligible to faith and for acting on.

And he shall understand, (i. e. that he may understand⁸) these things. The worldly-wise of that generation, too, doubtless, thought themselves too wise to need to understand them; as the wise after this world counted the Cross of Christ foolishness.

Prudent. Properly "gifted with understanding," the form of the word expressing, that he was *endowed with this understanding*⁹, as a gift from God. *And He shall know them*. While the wise of this world disbelieve, jeer, scoff at them, in the name of human reason, he who has not the natural quickness of man only, but who is endued with the true wisdom, shall know them. So our Lord says¹⁰, *If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it is of God*. The word, *wise*, may specially mean him who contemplates these truths and understands them in themselves, yet plainly so as to act upon them; and the word *endued with prudence*, may specially describe such as are gifted with readiness to apply that knowledge to practice, in judgment, discrimination, act¹¹. By uniting both, the Prophet joins contemplative and practical wisdom, and intensifies the expression of God's desire that we should be endowed with them.

For the ways of the Lord are right. If in the word, *ways*, the figure is still preserved¹², the Prophet speaks of the *ways*, as "direct and straight;" without a figure, as "just and upright."

The ways of the Lord are, what we, by a like figure, call "the course of His Providence;" of which Scripture says¹³, *His ways are judgment*¹⁴; *God, His ways are perfect*¹⁵; *the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works*¹⁶; *Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known*¹⁷; ¹⁸ *lo, these are parts of His ways, but how little a portion is heard of Him, and the thunder of His power who can understand?* ¹⁹ *Who hath enjoined Him His way, and who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?* These ways of God include His ordering for us, in His eternal wisdom, that course of life, which leads most directly to Himself. They include, then, all God's commandments, pre-

¹ Ps. cvii. 43. ² Ib. lxxiii. 16, 17. ³ Dan. xii. 10.

⁴ S. Jer. on Eccl. iii. 21.

⁵ Illi. 1.

⁶ S. James 1. 5.

⁷ Rom. xi. 22, 33.

⁸ The force of the abbreviated form, *יָדַע*.

⁹ כָּנָן, the passive of the *יָדַע* which had just preceded.

¹⁰ S. John vii. 17.

¹¹ As in their degree, the heathen too distinguish σοφία and φρόνησις.

¹² יָדַע is both used of physical and moral straightness.

¹³ Deut. xxxii. 4. Dan. iv. 37.

¹⁴ Ib. cxlv. 17.

¹⁵ Job xxvi. 14.

¹⁶ Ps. xviii. 30.

¹⁷ Ib. lxxvii. 10.

¹⁸ Ib. xxxvi. 23.

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ways of the LORD are right,
and the just shall walk in

them : but the transgressors
shall fall therein.

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cepts, counsels, His whole moral law, as well as His separate purpose for each of us. In the one way, they are God's ways toward us; in the other they are God's ways for us.

The just shall walk in them. God reveals His ways to us, not that we may know them only, but that we may do them. "The end of moral science is not knowledge, but practice," said the Heathen philosopher¹. But the life of grace is a life of progress. The word, *way*, implies not continuance only, but advance. He does not say, "they shall stand in God's ways," but *they shall walk in them*. They shall go on in them "upright, safe, and secure, in great peace and with nothing whereat to stumble"². In God's ways there is no stumbling block, and they who walk in them, are free from those of which other ways are full. Whereas, out of God's ways, all paths are tangled, uneven, slippery, devious, full of snares and pitfalls, God maketh His way straight, a royal highway, smooth, even, direct unto Himself.

But [and] the transgressors shall fall therein, lit. *shall stumble thereon*³. Transgressors, i. e. those who rebel against the law of God, *stumble* in divers manners, not *in*, but *at*⁴ the ways of God. They stumble at God Himself, at His All-Holy Being, Three and One; they stumble at His attributes; they stumble at His Providence, they stumble at His acts; they stumble at His interference with them; they stumble at His requirements. They rebel against His commandments, as requiring what they like not; at His prohibitions, as refusing what they like. They stumble at His Wisdom, in ordering His own creation; at His Holiness, in punishing sin; but most of all, they stumble at His Goodness and condescension. They have a greater quarrel with His condescension than with all His other attributes. They have stumble¹, and still stumble at God the Son, becoming Man, and taking our flesh in the Virgin's womb; they stumble at the humility of the Crucifixion; they stumble at His placing His Manhood at the Right Hand of God; they stumble at the simplicity, power and condescension, which He uses in the Sacraments; they stumble at His giving us His Flesh to eat; they stumble at His forgiving sins freely, and again and again; they stumble at His making us members of Himself, without waiting for our own wills; they stumble at His condescension in using our own acts, to the attainment of our degree of everlasting glory. Every attribute, or gift, or revelation of God,

which is full of comfort to the believer, becomes in turn an occasion of stumbling to the rebellious. *The things which should have been for his wealth, become to him an occasion of falling*⁵. "They cannot attempt their own wishes and ways to the Divine law, because, obeying what they themselves affect, the law of their members, they stumble at that other law, which leadeth unto life"⁶. With this the Prophet sums up all the teaching of the seventy years of his ministry. This is the end of all which he had said of the severity and mercy of God, of the Coming of Christ, and of our resurrection in Him. This is to us the end of all; this is thy choice, Christian soul, to walk in God's ways, or to stumble at them. As in the days when Christ came in the Flesh, so it is now; so it will be to the end. So holy Simeon prophesied, "This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and our Lord said of Himself, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. And S. Peter⁷; Unto you which believe He is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient. Christ crucified was unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God⁸. The commandment, which was ordained to life, Paul, when yet unregenerate, found to be unto death⁹. "Pray we then the Eternal Wisdom, that we may be truly wise and understanding, and receive not in vain those many good things which Christ has brought to the race of man. Let us cleave to Him by that faith, which worketh by love; let us seek the Good, seek the Just, seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near. Whatever God doeth toward ourselves or others, let us account right; for the ways of the Lord are right, and that cannot be unjust, which pleaseth the Just. Whatever He teacheth, whatever He commandeth, let us believe without discussion, and embrace most firmly for that cannot be false, which the Truth hath taught. Let us walk in His ways," for Christ Himself is the Way unto Himself, the Life. "Look up to heaven; look down to Hell; live for Eternity." "Weigh a thousand, yea thousands of years against eternity what dost thou, weighing a finite, how vast soever, against Infinity?"

¹ Aristot. Eth. l. 3.

² Poc.

³ Ps. cxix. 165.

⁴ As in Nah. iii. 3. Prov. iv. 19.

⁵ Ps. lxi. 22.

⁶ from Sanct.

⁷ S. Luke ii. 34.

⁸ S. John ix. 39. ⁹ 1 Ep. ii. 7, 8. ¹⁰ 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

¹¹ Rom. vii. 10. ¹² Rib.

¹³ Lap.

¹⁴ S. Aug. in Ps. xxxvi. L.